

*For George
Black, 26
Torquay*

THE ARGOSY

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THE WARDEN OF THE MARCHES

BY SYDNEY C. GRIER, AUTHOR OF "PEACE WITH HONOUR,"
"LIKE ANOTHER HELEN," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I

2

THE COMING OF QUEEN MAB

SO the mail is in, Georgie?"

"Yes, Dick; it came in about half-an-hour after you started. Here are your letters."

Major North threw himself luxuriously into a long cane chair, and held out his hand for the bundle of envelopes and papers which his wife gave him. "Anything from Mab?" he asked.

"Just a little scrap. Dick, I am getting dreadfully worried about her—her letters have been so strange for such a long time, and now the writing is so queer. She always seems as if she hadn't a moment to spare, and yet she really has nothing particular to do now. Do you know, I am beginning to be afraid that the strain of your uncle's illness, and the shock of his death, have been too much for her. I am sure she oughtn't to be living all alone in that big house. I asked Cecil Egerton to look after her, and I hoped to hear from her to-day, but there is no letter. Aren't you getting anxious yourself?" Major North, deep in his correspondence, grunted assent. "What do you think we had better do? Dick!—why, Dick!"

The letters went flying as Dick sprang up from his chair. His wife was staring incredulously at a young lady in a grey riding-habit who was cantering up the rough track, called by courtesy a drive, leading to the house from the gateway of the compound. Catching sight of the two figures on the verandah, the newcomer pulled up her horse suddenly, flung the bridle to the magnificent elderly servant who ran out from the hall-door to meet her, and slipping from her saddle, mounted the steps with a run.

"Oh, Dick! oh, Georgie! oh, my dear people, it is so good to see you again! Don't tear me in pieces between you." Her brother

VOL. LXX.

A

and his wife, dumb with astonishment, were both kissing her at once. "It is my real self, you know, and not an astral body. Now do say you are surprised to see me on the Khemistan frontier when you imagined I was in London! Don't rob me of the gratification I have come so far to enjoy."

"Surprise is no word for it. We are utterly amazed, completely flabbergasted," said Dick slowly. His sister heaved a satisfied sigh.

"Thanks, Dick; I'm so glad. I did want to surprise you."

"But, Mab, are you really only just off your journey?" cried Georgia. "You must have a bath and a rest before you talk any more."

"I come untold thousands of miles to see my only remaining relatives, and they don't think me fit to speak to until I have had a bath and a rest!" cried Mabel. "No, Georgie, we only did a very short stage to-day, so that we might arrive clean and comfortable. You don't think Mr. Burgrave would omit anything that would enable him to make a more dignified entrance into Alibad?"

"You don't mean to say that you came up with the Commissioner?" cried Dick and Georgia together.

"Rather!" A glance passed between husband and wife, and Mabel caught it. "Now, why this thushness? I had a chaperon, I assure you. I'll tell you all about it. And the Commissioner has been most kind—and patronising."

"Probably," said Dick dryly. "And was it Burgrave who escorted you to the gate here?"

"Oh no; it was that nice boy who went to Kubbet-ul-Haj with you seven years ago."

"Boy!" cried Georgia. "My dear Mab, Fitz Anstruther is one of the most rising young civilians in the province."

"And he said," went on Mabel, unheeding, "that he would look in again after dinner. Well, Georgie, he is three years younger than I am, at any rate. Now, Dick, don't be rude and say that that wouldn't make him so very young after all. I know I'm in the sere and yellow leaf. The fact was borne in upon me when I heard an angry woman on the voyage informing her cabin-mates that I was 'no chicken.'"

"What!" cried Dick. "Then the celebrated smile has been doing its deadly work, as usual? How many scalps this time, Mab?"

Mabel smiled gently. It might be perfectly true, as other women were never tired of saying, that she had no claim to be called beautiful. The most that could be said of her was that she was nice-looking, and the effect of that (people often added spitefully), was spoilt by the singular and most unpleasing combination of fair hair with dark brown eyes. But when the ladies had said their say, Mabel knew that she had but to smile to bring every man in the neighbourhood to her feet. There was a peculiar fascination about her smile which made a slave of the man upon whom it shone. It called forth all that was best in him, roused all the chivalry of his nature, and

compelled him to devote himself to Mabel's service. An irate London cabman, an elderly guard on a Scotch railway, and the magistrate who found himself obliged to fine Mabel for allowing her fox-terrier to go about unmuzzled, were among the victims. The magistrate was currently reported to have apologised privately for doing his duty, and to have been abjectly desirous of paying the fine out of his own pocket if Mabel would have allowed it. It was commonly understood that General North, Mabel's late guardian, had found his life a burden to him owing to the multitude of her suitors, and that he would scarcely allow her to go out alone, lest an unwary stranger, thanked with a smile for some slight service, should be impelled to propose to her on the spot.

"Well, Mab?" said Dick again, as his sister did not answer. "The voyage was the usual triumphal progress, I suppose? Any casualties?"

"No duels or suicides, Dick. The days of chivalry are gone, you know. But every one was very nice. I don't count the officers—it's their business to make themselves pleasant—but the captain took me into his cabin, and showed me the pictures of Mrs. Captain and the little Captains, and I was told he didn't do that for everybody. The ladies were not quite as friendly as—well, as I should have liked them to be. They talked me over a good deal, too. Once they asked a rather nice boy why he and all the rest liked me so much. He couldn't think of anything to say but that I was 'so awfully feminine, don't you know?' When he thought of it afterwards, he was rather pleased with himself, and came and told me. It wasn't bad, was it?"

"Oh, Mab!" said Georgia reproachfully.

"But, Georgie, you wouldn't have me unfeminine, would you?"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Dick. "Well, Mab, as you have got here safely, I suppose your friends were as helpful as your friends generally are?"

"They were perfectly delightful. When we got to Bombay they helped me with my luggage, and told me the right hotel, and where to get an ayah and a servant, and how to go to Bab-us-Sahel. To crown all, they found me the chaperon I told you about—who turned out to be the elderly lady who had disapproved of me most frankly of all on the voyage. Her name is Hardy, and she was coming to join her husband here. She is devoted to you, Georgie."

"Dear old Mrs. Hardy? I should think she was. It's mutual."

"Well, tastes differ. She is quite certain that I shall come to a bad end. We didn't speak very much on the way to Bab-us-Sahel, and when we got there, I was horrified to find what a journey we had still before us. I knew the railway hadn't got to you yet, but I thought it would only mean perhaps a day in a palanquin, with tigers and interesting things like that jumping out of the jungle every few minutes, and brave rescuers turning up in the very nick of time to save you. I never imagined there would be days and days of riding through a desert, with no jungle and no tigers at all. Happily we fell in with Mr. Burgrave when we left the railway, and as he was coming here he invited us to

travel with his party in royal state, which we did. Mrs. Hardy quarrelled with him most days on some pretext or other, for your sakes, which I didn't think nice of her when she was enjoying his hospitality. She seemed to think that everything he did was bound to bring the province to destruction." Again Dick and Georgia exchanged glances. "Dick, what is wrong between you and Mr. Burgrave?"

"It is unusual to find two men completely agreed on questions of policy," said Dick shortly.

"Well, just at present he has a grudge against you on my account. He considers you guilty of culpable negligence in leaving such a delicate and valuable piece of goods to find its way to Alibad unassisted. I tried to point out that the blame was entirely due to the wicked wilfulness of the piece of goods in question, but he still thinks you sadly callous."

"We haven't heard yet what has brought her Majesty Queen Mab to Alibad at all."

"No, that's another story. (Don't you admire my local colour?) Here followeth the confession of Mabel Louisa North. I had a great idea, Georgie, a splendid idea, when uncle died and I was left alone. I thought I would become a Medical, so as to come out in time and help you. I knew you would jeer, Dick, and try to dissuade me, so I decided not to say a word until I was fairly embarked on my triumphal career. I was going to take the London *Matric.* in January, and when I was entered at the School of Medicine I meant to burst out into sudden blaze and wire you the astonishing news. But the whole thing missed fire horribly. You may laugh, Georgie, for I daresay you have kept your mind supple, like that old man who said he was always learning, but you don't know how frightfully difficult it is to bring your mighty intellect down again to lessons when you have not done any for years and years. Would you believe it?—I broke down under the stress of the preparation—for the *Matric.*, mind—and my eyes gave out. No, it is nothing really bad"—as Georgia uttered a horrified exclamation—"Sir William Thornycroft pledged himself that they would soon be all right again, if I gave up work and took to frivolling."

"But if there's nothing the matter with them, I can't think why he didn't tell you to rest for a month or so, and let you go on again with glasses," said Georgia.

Mabel looked a little ashamed. "Well, the fact is, I made rather a baby of myself. I couldn't wear glasses, Georgie—think what a guy I should look! And you can't imagine how disappointed I was. I knew that the loss of a month's work would mean that I should fail, and I was feeling very miserable altogether, after weeks of bad headaches, and my eyes hurt so, and—and—I wailed a little. Sir William was most sweet, and asked me all about it, and then he said that he really didn't think the Medical was what I was best fitted for, and he advised me to travel for a little while and forget all about it."

"And she comes out here, where we have an eye-destroying glare all the year round, and dust-storms two or three times a week, to cure her eyes!" cried Georgia.

"My beloved Georgiana, I came here that you might minister to a mind diseased. When once the thought had flashed upon me, I simply couldn't stay in England. I just flew round to the shops, and bought whatever they showed me, and started as soon as I could settle matters at home and take my passage. I went on writing to you up to the very last minute. I shouldn't wonder if the letter I posted on my way to the docks travelled in the steamer with me. Is that it there? Well, have I explained matters?"

"It was an awful risk, Mab," said Dick, in an elder-brotherly tone. "We might have been both ill, or out in the district, or touring in Nalapur, or anything."

"But you weren't, you see, so it's all right. I had an inspiration that you'd be in your own house for Christmas. What time is dinner? Lend me a warm tea-gown, Georgie. How cold it gets here when the sun sets, and yet we were nearly roasted this morning! My belongings were to follow in a bullock-cart or two, but I haven't heard them arrive. Oh, it is sweet to see you two again, and looking so thoroughly happy and fit, too!"

She bestowed a kiss on the top of Dick's head, remarking as she did so that he was getting disgracefully bald, and rushed away to bestow a series of hugs on Georgia in the privacy of her own room. Her toilet did not take long, and she threw over her head the white shawl Georgia had lent her, and stepped out on the verandah. There was only a faint gleam of moonlight, and the sense of the vastness and dreariness of the desert around crept over her as she tried to distinguish in the dimness the lights of the Alibad cantonments, through which she had passed in the afternoon. The wind was chill, and gathering her wrap more closely round her, she turned to find her way back to the drawing-room. As she did so, the sound of a horse's footsteps struck upon her ear. Some one was riding past the house at no great distance, riding at a smart pace, which caused a clatter of accoutrements and an occasional sharp metallic ring when the horse's hoofs came in contact with a rock.

"How horrid it must be riding in the dark!" said Mabel to herself. "Dick," she cried, meeting her brother in the hall, "are you expecting any one to dinner? Some one is coming here on horseback."

"Oh no, it's no one for us," he answered shortly.

"But where can he be going, then? I thought this was the last English house on the frontier? It's a soldier, I'm sure, for I hear his sword knocking against the stirrup, or whatever it is that makes the clinkety-clanking noise."

"I can't tell you who it is, for I don't know, but the natives will tell you, if you are particularly anxious to hear. They say it's General Keeling."

"Georgia's father? But he's dead!"

"Exactly."

"But do you mean that it's his ghost?"

"Don't talk so loud. I don't want Georgia worried just now, and she may not have noticed the sounds. The natives say that whenever there is to be trouble on the frontier St. George Keeling gallops from point to point to see that all is going on well, just as he would have done in his lifetime."

"Oh, but they don't believe it really?"

"You shall see. Ismail Bakhsh!" The old *chaprasi* who had met Mabel at the door came forward, gorgeous in his scarlet coat and gold badge, and saluted. "Tell the Miss Sahib who it is she hears, out beyond the far corner of the compound."

The old man drew himself up and saluted again. "Sinjā Kilin Sahib Bahadar rides to-night, Miss Sahib."

"Oh, how dreadful!" said Mabel, turning to her brother with a blanched face. Ismail Bakhsh understood her words.

"Nay, Miss Sahib, it is well, rather. When the day comes that there is trouble on the border, and Kilin Sahib does not ride, then the reign of the Sarkar will be ended in Khemistan, and it may be in all Hindustan also."

"That will do, Ismail Bakhsh," said Dick, when he had interpreted the old man's words. "Come into the drawing-room, Mab."

"But, Dick, it can't be true? Isn't some one playing a trick?"

"We have never been able to bring it home to any one, if it is a trick. Anstruther and I have watched in vain, and most of the fellows from the cantonments have had a try too. We heard just what you hear, but we could never see anything."

"Dick, I think you are most awfully brave." Mabel shuddered as she pictured Dick and his friend approaching the sound, locating it exactly, perhaps—oh, horror!—hearing it pass between them, while still there was nothing to be seen. "Does it—he—ever come any nearer? How fearful if he should ride up to the door!"

"Why, Mab, you don't mean to say you believe in it?" Dick looked at her curiously. "It's quite true that the sound is heard when there's going to be trouble, for I have noticed it time after time, but I have a very simple theory to account for that. When the tribes living beyond this stretch of desert intend to make themselves disagreeable, they send mounted messengers to one another. The desert air carries sound well, and I'm not prepared to say that these rocks here may not have some peculiar property which makes them carry sound well too, but at any rate we hear, as if it was quite close, what is actually happening miles and miles away."

"Oh, do you really think so?" Mabel was much cheered. "But then, why should Georgia be frightened if she heard it?"

"Because of the trouble it foreshadows, which is a sad and sober

reality, not on account of the supernatural story the natives have been pleased to get up."

Georgia's entrance and the announcement of dinner banished the disquieting topic, and Mabel's creepy sensations vanished speedily under the influence of the light and warmth and brightness accompanying the meal, so eminently Western and ordinary in its appointments. Old times and scenes were discussed by the three, and family jokes recalled with infinite zest, in momentary entire forgetfulness of the turbulent frontier and the haunted desert outside. Shortly after they had moved into the drawing-room, however, the flow of reminiscences was interrupted by the entrance of Dick's subordinate, the handsome young civilian who had escorted Mabel to her brother's door. He walked in unannounced, as one very much at home.

"With Dr. Tighe's compliments to the rival practitioner," he said, handing a copy of the *Lancet* to Georgia. "I shall pass the Doctor's quarters going home, Mrs. North, so I can leave your *British Medical* for him if you have done with it."

"I will put it ready for you," said Georgia. "You have met Miss North before, I think?"

"Yes, indeed. It was this afternoon that I had the astonishment and delight of learning that the Kumpsioner Sahib had atoned for all his sins against this frontier."

"What, does Burgrave climb down?" cried Dick.

"Not a bit of it, Major. He's on the war-path, and seeing red. But he has escorted Miss North safely here."

"Oh, is Mr. Burgrave anxious for war?" asked Mabel. "I suppose that's the trouble which is coming on the frontier, then?" She stopped suddenly, with a guilty glance at Georgia.

"Never mind, Mab, I heard it," said her sister-in-law quietly.

"I should think so!" cried Fitz Anstruther. "The old joker—beg your pardon, Mrs. North, the old ch—General—was riding like mad. No, Miss North, war is the last thing that our most peaceful-minded Commissioner desires. He is coming to bring this benighted province up to date, and assimilate it to the well-governed districts he has known hitherto."

"After all, we can't be sure of his intentions," said Georgia. "What we have heard may be only rumour."

"No, he is on the war-path, Mrs. North, as I said. Young Timson, of the Telegraphs, who came up with him, was in with me just now, and says that he talked quite openly of his plans."

"I don't mind the man's intentions," cried Dick hotly, "if they are founded on an honest opinion. What I do mind is his talking of them to outsiders as if they were accomplished facts, before he has said a word to the men on the spot."

"Oh, but you forget that the Commissioner's intentions are as good as accomplished facts, Major," said Fitz. "'Is it not already done,

sahib?' as my old villain of a bearer says when I tell him to do something he has no idea of doing.

‘For Amirs must come down,
And Khans they must frown,
When the Kumpsioneer Sahib says Stop—
(Poor beggars, it’s we that say Stop!)’

isn’t it?” he added dolefully. “Timson says that Burgrave is particularly strong on cutting loose from Nalapur.”

“Oh, do explain these technicalities a little,” pleaded Mabel. Her brother took up the task, evidently as a kind of relief to his feelings.

“I suppose you know that Khemistan has always stood alone among the provinces of India? When it was first annexed, Georgia’s father was put in charge of this frontier, which was then the wildest, thievingest, most lawless place in creation. He raised the Khemistan Horse, and used them indiscriminately as troops and police. Small parties were stationed all along the frontier, and they were ready to march day or night at the news of a raid or a scrimmage. Within a few years the frontier was quiet, and General Keeling kept it so. He had his own methods of ruling, and the Government didn’t always agree with them, wherefore he ragged the Government, and the Government snubbed him horribly. However, he held on to his post, and died at it, and then the bad old days began again. That was about the time I came up here, and I found that the people looked back to Sinjā Kilin’s days as a kind of Golden Age——”

“Oh, Dick, they do still,” cried Mabel. “It makes poor Mr. Burgrave so vexed. He told me that whenever an old chief comes to pay his respects, the first thing he asks is always whether the Commissioner Sahib knew Sinjā Kilin. He got so tired of it at last that he said he would have given worlds to shout ‘Thank goodness, no!’”

“I can quite believe it. Well, they tried to govern Khemistan on the lines of the province next door, which has always been in the hands of a different school. Result, confusion, and all but civil war. Most of St. George Keeling’s young men gave up in disgust, and the Amir of Nalapur, just across the frontier, who had been the General’s firm ally, was goaded into enmity. That was the state of things five years ago.”

“And then,” said Georgia, “dear old Sir Magnus Pater, who was Commissioner for Khemistan in my father’s time, used all his influence to get Dick appointed Frontier Superintendent. It was the last thing he did before he retired, and we were thankful to leave Iskandarbagh and to get back to our very own country.”

“And in less than no time,” put in Fitz, “the frontier was quiet, owing to a judicious application of General Keeling’s methods, and the Amir of Nalapur was assuring Major North that he was his father and his mother. Mrs. North’s fame as a physician of super-

natural powers, and the Major's military discipline, have worked wonders in crushing the proud and extorting the respectful admiration of the submissive."

"Oh, that reminds me!" cried Mabel. "Georgie, do you write Dick's reports for him? Mr. Burgrave really believes you do."

("Oh, Miss North, what an injudicious question!" murmured Fitz, *sotto voce*.)

"Certainly not," returned Georgia briskly. "Do you think I would encourage Dick in such idleness? We write them together."

"But," objected Mabel, "I can't see why Mr. Burgrave should come to disturb all you have done, if you have got on so well."

"O wise young judge!" said Dick. "That's exactly what we can't see either."

"Because he is tired of hearing General Keeling alluded to as the best hated and feared and loved man in Anglo-Indian history," said Fitz. "Because to see your next-door neighbour succeeding where you have failed, by dint of methods which you regard with holy horror, is distasteful to the natural man. But let me tell you a little story, Miss North—an Oriental apologue, full of local colour. The ruler of many millions was glancing over the map of his dominions one morning, when his symmetry-loving eye lit upon one province governed differently from all the rest. To him, imperiously demanding an explanation, there enters Eustace Burgrave, Esq., of the Secretariat, C.S.I. and other desirable things, armed with a beautifully written minute on the subject, and points out that the province is not only a scandal and an eyesore, but a happy hunting-ground for firebrand soldier-politicals who know better than viceroys—a class of persons that ought obviously to be stamped out, in the interests of good government. Any remedies for this atrocious state of things? Naturally, Mr. Burgrave is prepared with measures that will make Khemistan the garden of India and a lasting memorial of the ruler's happy reign. No time is wasted. 'Take the province, Burgrave,' says the Great Great One, with tears of emotion, 'and my blessing with it,' and Burgrave accepts both. Hitherto he has been reforming the course of nature down by the river, now he comes up to teach us our lesson here."

"And do you mean to let him do what he likes?" cried Mabel.

"Nonsense, Mab. He is supreme in this province," said Dick.

"Besides, Miss North," Fitz went on, "the Commissioner's imposing personality puts opposition out of the question. You must have noticed the condescending loftiness of his manner, springing from the conviction that his career will be in the future, as in the past, a succession of triumphs. Failure is not in his vocabulary. He is born for greatness. Who could see that cold grey eye, that monumental nose and chin, and doubt it? Nothing short of a general convulsion of nature could disturb the even tenor of his way."

"Well, I am not quite sure of that," said Mabel musingly.

"Oh, I'm afraid there's no hope of him as a lady's man, if that's what you mean, Miss North. It is understood that he is by no means a hardened misogynist, but neither is he looking for a wife. He is simply waiting quite dispassionately to see whether the feminine counterpart of his perfections will ever present herself. Year after year at Simla he has surveyed the newest young ladies and found them wanting, and their mothers go away into corners and call him names, which is unjust. His fitting mate would scarcely appear once in a lifetime, perhaps not in an age."

"I think Mr. Burgrave needs a lesson," said Mabel.

"But consider, Miss North. It is no obscure future that the favoured damsel will be called upon to share. In time she will clothe her rickshaw-men at Simla in scarlet, and by-and-by, if she does what he tells her, she will sport the Crown of India on a neat blue ribbon—or should it be a pink one?"

"I think it will be as well for me to take him in hand," Mabel persisted.

"For goodness' sake, Mab, don't make things worse by importing the celebrated smile into the affair," cried Dick.

"Worse? Dick, you are ungrateful. If Mr. Burgrave finds himself mistaken in one matter of importance, he will be less cocksure in others."

"I don't know about that," said Georgia. "And take care, Mab. It's dangerous playing with edged tools."

"Then I will take the risk. Behold your heroic sister, Dick, willing to sacrifice herself for the sake of your career."

"And if the worst comes to the worst, the prospective glories of the viceregal throne will gild the pill," said Fitz.

CHAPTER II

"LIFE IS REAL; LIFE IS EARNEST"

OH, Georgie, I do so want a good long talk."

It was the next morning, and Mabel had settled herself on the verandah with her work, a laudable pretence in which no one had ever seen her set a stitch. After Dick had ridden away, she yawned a good deal, and looked out more than once disconsolately over the desert in search of entertainment, which did not appear, for Georgia had her household duties to perform before she could devote herself to amusing her sister-in-law. Mabel had several distant glimpses of her laying down the law to submissive servants, and paying surprise visits in the compound, but at last she mounted the steps, threw aside her sun-hat, and bringing out a work-basket, spread a little pile of delicate cambric upon the table before her.

"Talk, then," she said, with a pin in her mouth.

"But are you sure we shan't be interrupted? Have you quite done?"

"I think we are safe. I have visited the cook-house and the dairy, interviewed the gardener, arranged about the horses' and cow's food as well as our own, and physicked all the invalids in the neighbourhood. So begin, Mab."

"Well, don't you want to know my real reasons for coming out?"

"I thought we heard them last night—such as they are."

"How nasty you are, Georgie! Didn't you guess that there were other reasons behind, reserved for your private ear, and not to be exposed to Dick's ribaldry? The truth is, I was hungering and thirsting for reality, and that's why I came."

"My beloved Mab, is England a world of shadows?"

"It is exactly that—to women in our class of life, at any rate—and I am sick of shadows. Our life has become so smooth, and polished, and refined, that it is not life at all. We are all Tomlinsons more or less—getting our emotions second-hand from books and plays. Some of us go into the slums or the hospitals in search of experiences (you'll say that was what I tried to do), but even then we only see things, we don't feel them. I wanted to get to a place where things still happened, where there were real people and real passions."

"Do you know, Mab"—Georgia fixed a critical eye on her—"if you had been a little younger, I should have suspected you of a yearning to enter the Army Nursing Service. I can't tell you how many girls have lamented to me at different times the unreality of their lives, and proposed to set them right by means of that particular act of self-sacrifice. But as things are, I suppose, to use plain English, you were bored?"

"Bored to exasperation, then, you unsympathetic creature! But I am serious, Georgie. There's something you quoted in one of your letters from Kubbet-ul-Haj that expresses my meaning. It has haunted me ever since. It was something like, 'When the world grows too refined and too cultured, God sends great judgments to beat us back to the beginning of history again, to toils and pain and peril, and the old first heroic lessons—how to fight and how to endure.' It would be absurd for me, in England, to take to living in a slum, making my own things and teaching people who are much better than I am, but I thought out here——"

"And you find Dick and me dressing for dinner every evening, and getting the magazines monthly! You had better cross the border into Ethiopia, Mab. We are just as artificial here as at home."

"Georgie! as if I wanted to make a savage of myself, like the youth in 'Locksley Hall'! Surely life can be simple and primitive without being squalid?"

"You haven't asked my advice, and I don't know whether you want it, but it's dreadfully commonplace. Get married."

"You mean that I should know then what reality is? What an indictment to bring against Dick! What does he do to you, Georgie?"

Georgia smiled superior. "You don't expect me to begin to defend Dick to you?" she asked, then laughed aloud. "No, Mab, you needn't try to tease me about him at this hour of the day. But what I mean is that you get into the way of looking at things in quite a different light when you are married. You don't hold a brief for your own sex any longer, but for men as well. That makes the difference, I think. You are in the middle, instead of on one side, and that is at any rate a help towards seeing life whole."

"But do you always look at things now through Dick's spectacles? How painfully monotonous!"

"We don't always agree, of course. But we talk things over together, and generally one convinces the other. If not, we agree to differ."

Mabel shook her head. "Then I'm perfectly certain that you and Dick have never differed on a really vital matter," she said. "In that case I know quite well that neither of you would ever convince the other, and you could not conscientiously agree to differ, so what is to happen?"

Georgia did not seem to hear her. She rose and went into the drawing-room, and unlocking a little carved cabinet that stood on her writing-table, took something out of a secret drawer. "Look at this, Mab," she said, handing Mabel a piece of paper. It was a photograph, obviously the work of an amateur, of a little grave surrounded by lofty trees.

"Oh, Georgie!" the tears sprang to Mabel's eyes—"this is baby's grave?"

Georgia nodded. "Dick doesn't know that I have it," she said, speaking quickly. "Mr. Anstruther took the photograph for me, and I had one framed, and it always hung in my room. I used to sit and look at it when Dick was out. Sometimes I cried a little, of course, but I never thought he would notice. But he took it into his head that I was fretting, and when we left Iskandarbagh he gave the servants a hint to lose the picture in moving. Wasn't it just like him, dear fellow? but he never bargained for the servants' letting out the truth to me. I had this one as well, but when I saw how Dick felt about it I took care to keep it hidden away, and he thinks his plan has succeeded, and that I have forgotten. It makes him so much happier."

"I see," said Mabel, in a low voice. "You wouldn't have done that once, Georgie. I see the difference. But surely there is a name on the stone?" she was examining the photograph closely. "She was baptized, then? I never heard——"

"Yes, Dick baptized her; there was no one else—Georgia Mabel, he would have it so. Oh, Mab, it was awful, that time! We were the only English people at Iskandarbagh just then, and the tribes were out on the frontier. Miss Jenkins, the Bab-us-Sahel missionary, was coming to me. Since I met her first, she has been home to take the medical course, and is fully qualified. Well, she could not get to me,

and I couldn't get to Khemistan, and I had to stay where I was, and be doctor and patient both. Of course I had my dear good Rahah, and Dick was as gentle as any woman, but oh, it was terrible! But I shouldn't have minded afterwards, if only baby had lived. She was such a darling, Mab, with fair hair and dark eyes, like yours. Dick tried to cheer me up—joked about her being so small and weak, but she died in my arms a few minutes after she was baptized. Miss Jenkins got through to us the next day, at the risk of her life, but she was only in time for the—the funeral in the Residency garden."

"And you lived through that? Oh, Georgie, it would have killed me."

"Oh no; there was Dick, you know. Poor dear Dick! he was disappointed about baby, of course, but a man doesn't feel that sort of thing as a woman does. Besides, he was so glad I was left that he really could not think of anything else."

"And you, Georgie?"

"I can't talk of it, Mab, even to you—how I longed to die. But he never knew it. And when I was better, I saw how wicked I had been. I would have lost anything rather than leave him alone."

"Well," said Mabel, trying to speak lightly, "you have made acquaintance with realities, Georgie, at any rate, but I don't know that I am very keen on following in your footsteps. I believe you have made me afraid of taking your advice. Marriage seems to involve experiences out here which one doesn't get at home."

"It does," agreed Georgia, "and I suppose they would be too much for some women. But when you love the country and the people as I do—and love your husband, of course; you would scarcely come out here with him if you didn't—I think the life brings you nearer to one another than anything else could. It is such an absolute *solitude à deux*, you see, and you are so completely shut up to each other, that you seem really to become one, not just figuratively. It's rather a terrible experiment to make, as you say, but if it succeeds—why, then it's the very best thing in the world."

"I can't quite fancy myself thinking of Mr. Burgrave like that," murmured Mabel reflectively.

"Mab, I didn't think——"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Georgie. If I didn't laugh I should cry. And there's Dick coming back, and he'll see we have been crying. Talk about something else, quick!"

"I was wondering whether you would like to pay a call or two," said Georgia, thrusting a wet handkerchief hastily into her pocket. "I don't want to drag you out if you are tired still after your journey, but it would be nice for you to know people before all the Christmas festivities begin next week."

"Of course!" Mabel's sudden animation was not wholly assumed for Dick's benefit as he rode past the verandah. "Who is there to call upon?"

"Only your friend Mrs. Hardy, whose husband is the missionary here and acts as chaplain, and Flora Graham, the Colonel's daughter, I am afraid. Nearly all the men here are bachelors or grass-widowers. Two or three ladies will come in from Rahmat-Ullah and the other outlying stations next week, but we are still scarce enough to be valuable."

"That's a state of things of which I highly approve," said Mabel.

"Never knew a woman that didn't," said Dick, entering. "Ask Georgia if she doesn't like to see the men round her chair, though she pretends to think they're attracted by her professional reputation? But Miss Graham is going to call on you, Mab. She's dying to see you, but feared you would be too tired to pay visits this week. In gratitude for this honour, don't you think you ought to refrain from exercising your fascinations on her young man?"

"Really, Dick, I don't know what you can think of me. Is Miss Graham engaged?"

"Rather; to young Haycraft, of the Regiment."

"Ah, I fly at higher game," said Mabel austere.

"So I should have guessed."

"Oh, Dick, have you seen the Commissioner?" cried Georgia.

"Been closeted with him nearly all morning."

"And was he very horrid?"

"By no means. He didn't make any secret of his reforming intentions, but he gave me no hint as to his method of carrying them out. He only tells that sort of thing to casual fellow-travellers, I suppose. But I think he wished to make himself agreeable, and that I attribute to my having the honour of being Miss Mabel North's brother."

"Ah!" said Mabel wisely.

Late that afternoon she and Georgia set forth to visit Mrs. Hardy, very much against Mabel's will. She represented that she had only parted from the good lady the day before, and had not the slightest desire to renew the acquaintance, but Georgia was firm.

"We will only go in for a minute or two, for we must be back early to meet the Grahams, but I could not bear her to think herself slighted."

When they reached the missionary's bungalow, they found it in the throes of a general turn-out. The verandah was piled with furniture, and here Mrs. Hardy, a worn-looking little woman with a lined face, and thin grey hair screwed into an unbecoming knob, received them in the lowest possible spirits. She had always prophesied that the house would go to rack and ruin during her absence in England, and now she was convinced that it had. Only that morning she had discovered the fragments of her very best damask tablecloth doing duty as dusters, and three silver spoons were missing. Moreover, she believed she was on the verge of further discoveries that would compel her to dismiss at least half the servants. Georgia's inquiry after Mr. Hardy elicited the fact that he had contracted the bad habit of

having his meals served in his study, and reading while he partook of them, which was bound to have a prejudicial effect on his digestion in the future, while Mrs. Hardy felt morally certain that he had gone to church in rags for many Sundays past. Yes, he had spoken very cheerfully of several interesting inquirers who had come to him of late, but Mrs. Hardy had, and would continue to have, grave doubts as to the genuineness of their motives. Georgia sighed, and turned the conversation to the subject of the journey from the coast, but this only opened the way for a fresh flood of forebodings. The new Commissioner was bent on mischief, and the natives were perceptibly uneasy. Where they were not sullen, they were defiant, and Mrs. Hardy's eagle eye foresaw trouble ahead. Seeing that Georgia was not entirely at one with her, she descended suddenly to details.

"Ah, dear Mrs. North, I see you think I am a pessimist, but when you hear what I have to tell you——! Is—is Miss North in your confidence—politically speaking?" with a meaning glance at Mabel.

"Mrs. Hardy!" cried Georgia in astonishment. "Of course she is. Why not?"

Mrs. Hardy bridled. "I am relieved to hear that Miss North is not so entirely taken up with the Commissioner as to have no thought for her dear brother's interests," she said acidly. "Well, I must tell you that I hear on good authority that Mr. Burgrave intends to allow Bahram Khan to return to Nalapur. In the course of his journey he received in private a Hindu whom I recognised as Narayan Sing, the brother of the Nalapur Vizier Ram Sing, and I now hear that he has been closeted with him again to-day. Ram Sing has always been suspected of intriguing for Bahram Khan's return, and Narayan Sing has divided his time between them for years."

"Oh, but it's quite impossible!" cried Georgia. "The Commissioner would never take such a step without consulting my husband, and Dick would never countenance it. Bahram Khan has sinned beyond forgiveness."

"I wish I could think so!" said Mrs. Hardy mysteriously. "We shall soon see, my dear Mrs. North. What, must you go? I wonder Major North likes you to drive that high dogcart. You will certainly have an accident some day."

"Odious woman!" cried Mabel, as the dogcart dashed down the road. "How can you endure her, Georgie? She is the very incarnation of spite."

"No, no—of hopelessness," said Georgia. "The climate tires her, and her children are all settled at home, and she thinks Mr. Hardy is not appreciated here. Dear old man! I wish you could have seen him, Mab. He is all patience and cheerfulness, and really it is a good thing that he has Mrs. Hardy to keep him within bounds. All our people and the native Christians love him, and even the mullahs who come to argue with him can't succeed in hating him. His learning is really wasted up here, and I don't think he has had more

than six baptisms of converts in the five years we have known him. We always say that the natives who become Christians here must be very earnest indeed, for Mrs. Hardy discourages them so conscientiously beforehand."

"Horrid old thing! spoiling her husband's work!" cried Mabel.

"No, not at all. He has been taken in more than once. And really, Mab, it is hard for us to urge these people to be baptized. The persecution is awful."

"Here—under English rule?"

"Not from us, of course, but from their own people. Two men have been lured across the frontier and murdered, and another had a false charge trumped up against him, and only just escaped hanging. It seems scarcely fair on our part unless we can get them away to another part of India."

"Well, Mrs. Hardy isn't exactly a good example of the benefits of Christianity. She is enough to frighten away any number of intending converts."

"And yet she is the staunchest friend possible at a pinch. I had rather have her with me in an emergency than any other woman I know."

"That's because she likes you. She hates me, and would rejoice to make my life a burden to me. The idea of hinting that I would betray Dick to Mr. Burgrave! Wasn't it infamous? But who is Bahram Khan?"

"He is the Amir of Nalapur's nephew, and was intended to succeed to the throne, but to expedite matters he tried to poison both his uncle and Dick's predecessor here, who had been obliged to scold him for some of his doings. The matter could not be absolutely proved against him, but he thought well to take refuge in Ethiopia, and has stayed there ever since. To guard against his returning, Dick advised the Amir to adopt another nephew, Bahadar Shah, as his successor, and he has done so. Bahram Khan is only about twenty-three now, but he married an Ethiopian lady of rank four years ago. His poor old mother, who is one of my Nalapur patients, was very sore at his arranging it without consulting her. She remained at her brother's court when her son escaped, for it was she who saved the lives of the Amir and Sir Henry Gaunt. She suspected her son's intentions, and tasted the food prepared for the banquet. It made her very ill, but she gave the warning, and Dr. Tighe was sent for post-haste in time to save her life. He was not allowed to see her, of course, but he gave directions."

"But do you think Mr. Burgrave will let Bahram Khan come back?"

"Oh no, it's impossible. But I wish," added Georgia thoughtfully, "that I hadn't been so emphatic in denying it to Mrs. Hardy. If anything happens now, she will know that Dick and the Commissioner are not in accord."

But why shouldn't she know?"

"Because out here we have to stick together. Quarrel in private if you like, but present a united front to the enemy," said Georgia sententiously, as she pulled up before her own verandah. Two horses, in charge of native grooms, were waiting at the door.

"Our visitors have arrived before us," said Mabel, and they hurried into the drawing-room, to find an elderly man of soldierly appearance, and a tall yellow-haired girl, waiting patiently for them.

"I'm afraid you will think us very rude for thrusting ourselves upon you so soon," said Miss Graham, addressing herself to Mabel, after Georgia had apologised for their absence, "but my father happened to have time to come with me to-day, and I was so very anxious to see you——"

"How sweet of you!" murmured Mabel softly, as the visitor stopped suddenly.

"Because I want to ask you a favour," finished Miss Graham. Her father laughed, and Mabel looked politely interested.

"I want you to be Queen of the Tournament next week instead of me."

"Oh, Georgie," cried Mabel, "and you said that life out here was modern and unromantic! Why, here we are plunged into the Middle Ages at once."

"It is only my daughter's poetical way of speaking of our annual Gymkhana," explained Colonel Graham. "She has officiated so often that she feels shy. The fact is," he added, turning confidentially to Georgia, "Haycraft has loafed about here so much that he's wretchedly stale this year, and Flora can't bear to give a prize to any one else."

"No, no, papa; what a shame!" cried Miss Graham, blushing. "You see, Miss North, I have really done it a good many times, and I'm sure everybody would like to see some one new. Besides, I am engaged, you know, and—and——"

"And it would make it more realistic if the opposing heroes felt they were really struggling for the Queen's favour?" said her father. "Well, that's easily managed. Intimate to Haycraft that unless he wins he'll be obliged to resign you to the successful competitor."

"But why ask me?" said Mabel.

"Because there's no one else," replied Miss Graham quickly. "No, I don't mean that; but my father says I ought to ask the Commissioner to give the prizes, and I don't like him well enough. But he couldn't possibly be offended if I asked you. It's so obviously the proper thing."

"Now why?" asked Mabel again, and the other girl blushed once more.

"I saw you yesterday, when you rode past our house," she said shyly, "and I knew at once that you were the right person."

Mabel smiled graciously. Such open admiration from one of her own sex was rare enough to be precious. "I am wondering what I should wear," she said. "I have a little muslin frock——"

"Oh!" said Miss Graham, evidently disappointed. "But perhaps—do you think I might see it?"

"If Georgie and Colonel Graham will excuse us for a moment," said Mabel, rising, and she led the way to her own room, and summoned the smiling brown-faced ayah whom she had brought from Bombay.

"Oh!" cried Flora Graham again, when the "little muslin frock" was displayed to her, but her tone was not now one of disappointment. The frock might be little, whatever that term might mean as applied to it, but it was not therefore to be despised. It was undoubtedly made of muslin, but it had an under-dress of softest primrose silk, and the glories of frills and lace and primrose ribbon which decked it bewildered her eyes. "It is lovely!" she said slowly, "and look how your ayah appreciates it. I wish mine had the chance of ever regarding one of my gowns with such reverential admiration! And what hat will you wear with it?"

"They tried to make me have one swathed in white and primrose chiffon," said Mabel indifferently, "but I knew I could never wear that. I shall use this with it." She indicated a large black picture hat.

"That will be perfect," said Miss Graham. "It's the finishing touch. Oh, you will—you must give the prizes. That gown would be wasted otherwise. You will do it, won't you?"

Mabel consented, yielding sweetly to the eager entreaties addressed to her, and in the talk which followed set herself to gain an acquaintance with all the gaieties that were to be expected during the following week. When Georgia came to say that Colonel Graham was obliged to leave, the two girls were discussing ball-dresses with the keenest interest.

"I can't make Mabel out," Georgia said to her husband that night. "Sometimes she seems in such deadly earnest, and yet she is as anxious as possible to take part in everything that is going on."

"But why in the world shouldn't she?"

"It's not that; but I can't think why she should care for it."

"No, I suppose not. You never felt that it was absolutely necessary for you to play the fool for a bit, did you, Georgie? But Mab does—has periodical fits of it, alternating with the deadly earnest. Let her alone to have her fling. She'll settle down some day, and it does no harm."

But Georgia was unconvinced.

(To be continued.)

REVERSIONS

BY JOHN AYSCOUGH, AUTHOR OF "ON KALI'S SHOULDER," ETC.

[*To the LADY DIANA HUDDLESTON this is inscribed
by her kind permission*]

CHAPTER I

I PLAINLY perceive," observed Lady Haddon, "that you are about to make a fool of yourself."

Lady Haddon is universally spoken of as the most charming woman in the world, and her manner now lacked none of its usual sweetness.

Her brother thanked her; but his charm of manner was not so great, nor were his tones so sweet.

"It is obvious," explained the lady, "that before you leave Haddon you will have proposed to Marjory Eccleston!"

Her manner retained its blandness, but it is possible that there may have been the slightest conceivable elevation of tone.

"Admitting the justice of your 'wild surmise'—what then?"

Captain Dorset drew a clean envelope towards him and began to draw upon it a picture of a little man in a hurry putting a very improbable horse at a very impossible fence. It was not the hunting season; but, when idle or annoyed, this gentleman was apt to draw little timber horses with little afflicted men on them.

"If any one were to bang a door now, or the house were to be struck by lightning," remarked his sister, watching him, "you would bite the tip of your tongue off."

It was true that he was also much given to protruding the extremity of that unruly member, obliquely to the left, when engaged upon his sketches.

"Doors are not banged in your well-ordered house," he retorted, regretting that he found it impossible to keep the tongue out while he talked. "And if the house were struck by lightning *you* might be killed yourself."

He wagged his head sidewise with some complaisance; but as the weather was singularly bright and clear Lady Haddon did not seem much alarmed.

"If," she said, returning to the question of Miss Eccleston, "you propose to her now, you will be a goose. She has not got two red cents to knock together."

"Fortunately," observed Captain Dorset, "I have no desire that my wife should spend her time knocking cents together, red or blue."

Lady Haddon laughed indulgently at this easy pleasantry.

"All the same," she hinted, "they are convenient things to have. One need not knock them unless one feels inclined."

"The red cent is not a peculiarly valuable coin in any country," objected the young man; "in Great Britain it is not even current."

His sister laughed again; still indulgently, but with a certain *arrière pensée* that Captain Dorset heard and instantly resented.

"The metal," she said, "that Madge Eccleston is so rich in is current coin in no quarter of the globe—though doubtless useful everywhere."

"And that?" inquired her brother, savagely increasing the difficulties of his fence by the wanton addition of a brook on the near side of it.

"Is brass," replied the lady suavely.

The young man scowled fiercely, and was about to exclaim, but Lady Haddon had not finished.

"That girl has more assurance than any six ordinary women of her age. She might be five-and-thirty."

"Of course she might—if she had been born in 1863!"

Captain Dorset fired this volley with a rather brutal laugh. Lady Haddon reddened, for she recognised the allusion to her own birthday on the 3rd of April in the year mentioned, whereas for many years she had been universally known as seven-and-twenty.

Her brother was not spiteful, nor at all given to striking below the belt. Not given, in fact, to engage in Amazonian warfare at all. But he had been surprised into ill-temper by his sister's tone in speaking of Miss Eccleston.

"Madge Eccleston," he continued, seeing that his sister had one foot already in the stirrup of her high horse, "has, at all events, two qualities that should commend her to your fellow-feeling. She is beautiful, and has a delightful manner."

"Admitting my beauty and my manners," remarked his sister—not, as he perceived, admitting those of Miss Eccleston—"it does not appear that you can live upon them."

"Your beauty and your manners secured Haddon and eleven thousand a year," remarked her brother, slightly softening the asperities of the take-off in his picture.

She laughed.

"You don't mention poor Walter," she suggested.

"I meant *him* when I said Haddon," declared the young man, grinning mendaciously.

"But," objected the lady, "if Madge marries you her beauty and her manners will *not* have secured a baronet, a castle, and (as you optimistically put it) eleven thousand a year."

"She will have secured me!"

"Exactly!"

They both laughed; their ill-temper was not serious.

"My dear Mark," said his sister confidentially, "the truth is you would *both* be throwing yourselves away. *She* could do much better, and so could *you*."

"But if we love each other?" inquired the warrior, surveying his hunchback equestrian with the indulgent fondness of a creator.

Lady Haddon made a peculiar noise in her throat, not really an aristocratic sound: a sort of compromise between a cluck and a snort.

"Love your grandmother!" she ejaculated.

"Why, certainly," asserted the gentleman. "But you know I am expressly forbidden to *marry* her!"

His sister laughed again.

"About the only commandment you've ever kept," she declared uncharitably.

"Not at all," asserted her brother stoutly; willing to justify himself like the lawyer. "I have never removed my neighbour's landmark. That crime must have been prevalent at an epoch when hedges were more portable than they are now."

"Now go, like a good boy," begged the lady, "and let me answer all these tiresome letters."

The young man lighted a cigarette and stepped out of his sister's window on to the broad stone terrace that runs along the south front of Haddon Castle.

"I cannot trust him," thought the lady; "he is selfish in a way, but one can't build too much on that. He likes his comforts and his luxuries; he would be miserable and insufferable if he had to give up one of them. But they are so unreasoning; they *know* all that; but when they think themselves in love they choose to forget it; only till the mischief is done, and they are married and done for, then they remember all about it. Oh yes; and the girl is soon enough reminded. No, Mark, I do *not* trust you. As for Madge, I *thought* she had sense enough, but I begin to have misgivings. He is, of course, the dearest boy in the world, and there can only be one opinion as to his looks. And they are thrown so dreadfully together here . . ."

CHAPTER II

CAPTAIN DORSET strolled along the stone terrace and wondered how long it was until dressing-time. He was not anxious for his dinner, except as a point to be looked forward to. He liked the country and he liked country houses, but except in the autumn and winter there is not much to do in them.

That was how he got into mischief. His sister had not invited him, but he had been to a brother officer's wedding in the same county, and he had come on here after it. Madge Eccleston had been one of the bridesmaids, and it had been the news that she was going on to Haddon that had decided Mark to go there.

He looked at his watch and found it was a quarter-past six. He did not see his way to taking more than three-quarters of an hour over his toilet, so there was just an hour on hand to get rid of.

Sir Walter Haddon was certainly writing letters at this hour; perhaps every one was doing the same. Captain Dorset hated writing letters, and the only letter he had received to-day was a reminder from his tailors that they had been honoured of late neither by the commands nor by the remittances of the gallant officer. Next time they wrote he would order a suit of clothes. To-day he could not be bothered.

"If," thought Mark, "Madge Eccleston were here and I were somewhere else, I would not mind writing to *her*;" but that, of course, was an excursion into the ideal. He had no notion of writing to her as it was.

"Captain Dorset, what are you thinking of?"

The drawing-room windows also opened upon the south terrace, and Miss Eccleston had been reading near one of them.

"Of you," the young man replied without hesitation. His manner was not very sentimental, but it suggested satisfaction. In fact, he had begun to dread being bored for a whole hour, and the terror of being bored is the skeleton in the cupboard of the modern young man.

Miss Eccleston laughed.

"Of course!" she said, making room in her corner for Captain Dorset's evident intention of sitting there too. "But *what* were you thinking about me?"

"I was regretting," replied the truthful youth, "that you were not staying in some other neighbourhood—or that I was not."

"A civil regret! And why?"

"Merely that we might have the pleasure of corresponding. I left my sister up to the girths in letters, and, passing the library windows, got a glimpse of Walter also hard at it. It made me think that I should like writing letters if they were all to you."

Miss Eccleston declared that this was a specious kind of flattery—after all, for correspondence implied absence.

"Yes. But you *were* absent; it was only a question of distance. I do not want to write to you *now*."

The girl laughed.

"There would, at all events, be very little risk of your letter going astray *en route*," she observed. "Don't you think," she inquired, "that it would be nicest out of doors? It looks lovely down by the lake."

She had no sort of objection to Captain Dorset's company nor to a *lôte-à-lôte* with him; but it struck her that if any one else were to arrive in the drawing-room, which was an immense apartment, it might seem ridiculous that two people could not find room to sit in it more than fourteen inches apart.

Captain Dorset hinted that he was excellently content as things were;

and, without skipping over his legs, Miss Eccleston could scarcely get out of her corner ; but she did somehow make him understand that she intended to do as she had said.

"If we sit here twenty minutes," she told herself, "he will propose to me."

And that she did not at present desire. So the gallant warrior's long legs had to be removed from their position of a barricade, and they strolled leisurely down the broad terrace steps and across the sloping lawn to the little lake.

At the garden end, Haddon Pool, as it is called, is not more than fifty yards wide, and lies between conventional stone banks, but it widens and bends as it gets farther from the castle, and the banks are several hundred yards apart and clothed with copse.

"Come for a row," suggests the young man.

"If you will row," agrees the girl.

The boat is small, and, as Miss Eccleston observes, rather "tittuppy." But the lake looks so lovely that she cannot resist it.

He makes her very comfortable in the stern seat, and they glide out into the middle.

"No!" she says. "Keep nearer in, in case of accidents."

"It's a great deal deeper, as it happens, along the edge, than out here," he objects.!

"Never mind. If I am drowned I like being drowned close to shore. Can't you swim, though?"

"Yes. You need not be afraid. I could swim all round the lake with you in my mouth like a retriever," he asserts.

She glances at his mouth as if surprised by a new idea of its proportions, but does not seem much fascinated by the picture.

"My head and my feet would both dangle in the water," she reminds him ; "only the small of my back would be left dry."

Again they both laugh. When one is young and good-looking, and in perfect health, it does not take much to make one cackle. Some one else said that. I repeat it.

CHAPTER III

I WISH," said Captain Dorset, "that I had. I very nearly did. I wonder what she would have said."

Repentance is the word by which we express our not usually very poignant regrets at the follies we might have omitted but have not. I do not know what is the correct term for the inverse sentiment.

Captain Dorset was suffering from it.

It was about five minutes to eight, and he was not nearly ready for dinner. They had both been disgracefully late, and had sneaked in with guilty haste.

Nevertheless it had been delightful, and he had screwed out of

Miss Eccleston a half promise of coming again—by moonlight—after dinner.

"I wonder," he thought, continuing his regrets that he had nothing to repent of, "whether she would have been in a rage or whether she would have liked it."

"Both, I daresay," he added, thrusting one ample foot into a boat-like pump.

He was a big young man, and his feet were not, as he euphemistically put it, "deformed." He considered it unmanly to have little feet.

When he got downstairs there was, he found, a new arrival. There were in fact two, but the one that mattered was a lady.

He had to take her in: last night he had had Miss Eccleston. To-night Lady Haddon was going to separate them.

He looked round the hall when he got down, and saw that Madge was still in arrears.

"They take such a deuce of a while to dress," he thought, knowing that his sister would be cross. For unpunctuality at Haddon was the sin for which there is no forgiveness.

"Let me introduce my brother, Baroness," observed Lady Haddon. And Captain Dorset made his bow to the new arrival; but he did not catch her name. It sounded German: but the lady was evidently English or American.

Mark was too much preoccupied at the moment by the lateness of Miss Eccleston to give his new friend much attention. He talked to her, but he was not listening to what he said.

As to Miss Eccleston's unpunctuality, he felt all the guilt of an accomplice.

"It is all Mark's fault," declared his sister; "he kept her out on the lake till nearly eight. We may expect her about a quarter to nine."

Sir Walter smiled hungrily. He could not abuse a lady guest; but he was conscious of a vacuum. He despised luncheon, and tea was Anathema to him. So he was the mere shell of that which nature is said to "abhor." A quarter-past eight Miss Eccleston appeared, apologetic but serene. Her toilette had not been less careful than usual, and she looked her best. There was no flurry, or bustle, or apprehensiveness about her.

Captain Dorset admired her more than ever.

The other new arrival had to take her in, an elderly young man called "Bible" Cholmeley, because he had a famous Lollard Bible that had belonged to John of Gaunt—not because of any tendency on his part to excessive searching of the Scriptures.

He was apt to be *en disponibilité*, and Lady Haddon had wired for him from London as follows:—

"To Cholmeley, Carlton Club, S.W. Come over and help us. Macedonian, Haddon Castle, Warchester."

On his arrival she had explained about Mark and Miss Eccleston.

"Have I got to propose to her, do you mean?" he inquired with the intrepidity of a true friend.

"Well, no. That, I should say, would not be really necessary. But you must be always in the way."

"I am *never* in the way!" he protested.

"Indeed no, dear Mr. Cholmeley; but you must be *fra le piedi* of them both. If you *could* monopolise her a good deal, and *if* the Baroness could flirt with him a good deal, all might yet be well."

CHAPTER IV

AT dinner Mark had time to take soundings, and arrive at some decisions concerning the female new arrival. As for Bible Cholmeley, every one knew him. He was familiar as household words. Indeed, so universally was this elderly young man admitted as the intimate of every upper circle that a recent variant of his sobriquet was "Family Bible."

But the Baroness was new. Mark had never seen or heard of her.

She was undeniably handsome, and certainly not older than Captain Dorset himself. Lady Haddon was a full half-a-dozen years senior to her brother.

She betrays, as he told himself, every symptom of wealth and cleverness.

Her jewels were undeniable, and he had never seen any one so perfectly dressed.

"Is this your first visit to England?" inquired Mark.

"Yes. It has lasted nine-and-twenty years," she answered. "I was born here."

They both laughed.

"My husband's family were Austrians," she said, "but he was an American citizen, and lived all his life out there till we married."

So she was a widow. Though only nine-and-twenty, she was evidently not a recent widow. There was nothing in the least funereal about her delightful dress; and yet, as he noticed, it was all black and lilac.

As she moved there came the glimmer of diamonds from among the black lace, and her rings were a knight's ransom. He noticed that she carried an enormous fan of tortoise-shell and black lace. As it lay in her lap he noticed that along the outer stick crept a name in large brilliants, surmounted by a coronet, also of good diamonds. He tried to read the name, but could not.

"It is 'Rose,'" she said, laughing out of her extraordinary blue eyes.

He had never seen such eyes. He told himself that they were like an unlimited company, and probably as dangerous. But of their beauty there was no question.

He laughed too, and turned to look straight into the twin depths of cloudy azure.

Miss Eccleston looked across just then, and replied to Bible Cholmeley's inquiry as to which language she liked best for singing, that in her opinion all languages were tiresome to listen to.

" . . . I mean in singing, of course," she added, not too immediately.

As for Mark he made no bones about enjoying himself. He would have preferred originally to sit next Madge; as he could not, he piously thanked Heaven that he had something so entirely decorative to sit next to.

"My other name," said the Baroness, "is Von Hagel. It will make you less *distract* if I tell you at once. I saw you didn't catch the name, and if I did not tell you, you would be wondering all the time."

"What's in a name? A Rose by any other name . . ."

Baroness Von Hagel laughed again; and this time more provokingly.

"Ah," she said, "I knew that must come. It always does. You are the seven hundred and eighty-fourth young man who has told me that by any other name I should smell as sweet."

"Only seven hundred and eighty-fourth! How few the men you must have met."

"That," said the beautiful lady, "is a little better. You improve rapidly!"

As she turned her head, he noticed how faultless her nose was. A good nose is far rarer than fine eyes.

It was really odd that her name should be Rose; for there was something absolutely like a flower in the texture and the colouring of her dazzling white-pink skin. And an odour, fresh and flower-like, seemed to hang round her like an atmosphere.

Lady Haddon listened sweetly to the County Member's scheme for the sanitation of Puddlemire, but she smiled inwardly as she saw without watching her brother's obvious resignation. With Bible Cholmeley she was less pleased. He was not, she suspected, doing his best. Indeed, he more than once glanced across, more than half anxiously, at Mark.

"That," thought Lady Haddon, "would be unpardonable. If he did such a thing as that, I would never have him inside the house again." But to the County Member she loudly expressed her detestation of the conduct of the man who would not buy the sewage.

When the ladies went away, the County Member poured forth the sewage on Sir Walter and the Rector, who tried to divert some of it towards Mr. Eccleston, Madge's father, and the two young men. But they would none of it, and kept down at their own end of the table pumping one another about the Baroness in stealthy undertones.

"Have you met her before anywhere? I never heard of her."

"Oh yes," replied Bible Cholmeley. "I've seen her in London; though she doesn't come to town much, and she was staying in the spring at Farring Dene."

Now, everybody who knows anything of anything, knows that Farring

Dene is the head-quarters of the great house of Orpeth; and Captain Dorset was well aware that any guest of the Duke of Shepply was "all right."

"A widow, eh?"

"Yes, she married at eighteen or nineteen, and her husband was drowned the year following. He was a Dutchman."

"No! An Austrian naturalised in America. Rich I should fancy."

"I don't think so. She had the tin, they say."

"Who was she, then?"

"Oh, nobody. Her father was a smallish squire somewhere in Wales, I fancy; and he was always grubbing about on his land for coal, and found it—found enough to found a fortune."

"And with all her money, and all the rest that she has, she has never married again?"

"No; she has buried herself in the country. The Duchess of Shepply met her by a perfect accident, and they took a liking to each other. At Farring Dene she got lots of other invitations, but jumped at none of them."

"I wonder how Pauline got her to come here."

"Told her *you* were coming, I suppose," suggested Mr. Cholmeley.

"Or you," amended the modest Captain.

CHAPTER V

OLD *Jemima Bull*, the Rector's spinster sister, was engaged in narrative for the entertainment of the other ladies in the drawing-room. She was a very nice old woman, much devoted to poultry and good works, with a pleasant earthly fondness for novels and short whist.

"It was really a most extraordinary thing," she declared, nailing the County Member's lady. "When his wife was taken he disappeared, and we found him four weeks afterwards in the shrubbery sitting on five lost tennis balls. The Rector thought it very touching. I cried, *Lady Haddon*."

The widower in question was a turkey-cock whose helpmate a fox had eaten.

"For my part," objected the Baroness, "I refuse to admire the sagacity of your bird. However blinded by sorrow, he might have convinced himself they were not eggs; and even if they were, the probability was all against his having laid them himself."

"And I," said Miss Eccleston, "am only struck by the intelligence of the tennis-balls, who had no idea of being hatched by a parent so evidently determined to sit upon them."

"Nor," added the County Member's wife, seeing that it behoved her to say something smart, "can one allow one's feelings to be worked upon until one knows the third volume of the story; I have very little doubt that the sentimental widower shortly afterwards married again?"

Old Jemima, as every one called her, reluctantly admitted that such was indeed the case; and in the midst of her defence of his conduct the door opened, and the gentlemen came in.

Captain Dorset found himself near his sister, and began to chat with her; unfortunately, however, alluding to his lateness at dinner, and foolishly apologising for it.

"It was very naughty of you, Mark. You know how particular Walter is about being in time for dinner. And you might have known that if you ran yourself late you would make the girl much later. I waded to you to come in, but you would not take any notice."

"*Did you see us?*" inquired the young man anxiously. "I never saw you."

"Yes; I was watching from the west oriel. I saw *everything*."

"Through a field-glass?"

His sister nodded ominously.

"Oh, Pauline!"

He looked much disconcerted; and was evidently pained by her perfidious espionage.

"I saw you kiss her," she said.

"*Did you?*" he faltered.

She nodded three times, and each time her head wagged the lady looked more severe and the gentleman more sheepish.

"Do you know?" he inquired irrelevantly, "the anecdote of the Sunday-school Teacher and the Ingenious Infant?"

"I know several. If it is one of yours, I am pretty sure to have heard it!"

"Let that pass," said the young man loftily. "You are *sure* that you saw me?"

"Certain!" reiterated the lady.

"Oh, Pauline! and through a field-glass?"

"Through a field-glass."

"Then here beginneth the anecdote. There was a certain Sunday-school, and in it there was a teacher . . ."

"There often is."

"And a pupil."

"That also has occurred before."

"And the teacher told the infant that the Powers above see everything that takes place. Are you attending, Pauline?"

"Yes, Mark; but I don't want to."

"That," replied her brother sweetly, "is not the point. The infant, hearing this, demanded of the teacher whether the Powers above had beheld him smite his poor little lame sister in their small backyard upon the previous evening. The teacher replied (like you, Pauline, to my queries) in the affirmative, saying, 'that such smiting had been distinctly visible, only with the naked eye.' Whereupon the infant

remarked—attend, Pauline—that that was odd, for he'd never had no lame little sister, nor never had no small backyard."

"You mean," laughed Lady Haddon, "that I *didn't* see you kiss her."

"Oh no, Pauline! I only meant I never did."

Lady Haddon laughed again, and seeing the Baroness close at hand went off to talk to Mr. Eccleston. He was a very young-looking man of fifty with scientific tastes, and divided his time between the study of house-flies, diseases of the throat and knee, and the observation of the criminal procedure of ants. Lady Haddon was wont to say of him that nobody with less than six legs had any interest for him.

Captain Dorset turned towards the Baroness and told her in a tone of sympathy, just loud enough for Lady Haddon to catch as she moved away, that his sister was suffering from a blister on her tongue.

"She is terribly subject to them," he said; "in all other respects her health on week-days is excellent."

Mr. Cholmeley approached also and took the beautiful lady on the other flank. He began with a question and the Baroness turned to answer it. At Mark's left there was a window open to the ground, and he stepped out of it. At the other end of the drawing-room by another window, also open, stood Miss Eccleston.

He walked quickly to it along the terrace and greeted her from outside.

"Come out," he said, sinking his voice, "it's glorious outside. And Miss Masham's going to sing."

Miss Masham was the County Member's daughter.

Madge laughed.

"It's a powerful argument for flight," she replied, and came out into the broad moonlight of the terrace.

"You promised you would come out in the boat again," he urged "It will be far more lovely now than by daylight."

"But much more dangerous."

"Yes, *much*," he agreed solemnly, "but not for *you*," he added, laughing.

They strolled leisurely across the dry dewless turf, and the moon touched all they looked upon with her gleaming silver. The old castle, bowered among its "immemorial elms," lay dozing warmly in the hot night. A smell of incense seemed to come from the belt of pines that screened the north bank of the lake. A coot, far away out of sight, called to its mate. There seemed no breeze at all, and yet a stealthy whispering crept among the leafy shadows of the spinny. Neither of them spoke at first; she was listening to the great silence of the night; he was foolishly wondering how he should say what he was determined by the influence of hour and place to say.

The picture of the castle lay unbroken on the cool black breast of the lake until, as they stepped into the little boat, they sent out curling ripples to break it. It shivered, and then mended again, as they glided away to the lonelier end of the winding pool.

The smell of the summer night came delicately from unmeasured distances of wood and field; it breathed about them, soft and rich

and sweet. It seemed now as though all things lay in sleep but they two; as if the happy earth and sweet night were all their own.

"'In such a night,'" he quoted . . . And she took it from him.

"'The moon shines bright. In such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,
And they did make no noise . . .'"

("Models of discretion!" thought Mark.)

"' . . . in such a night
Troilus, methinks, mounted the Trojan walls,
And sighed his soul towards the Grecian tents
Where Cressid lay that night.'"

The girl trailed her white fingers in the cool black water.

"Oh, what would one give to have written that!" she said, more earnestly, no doubt, than if it had been eleven o'clock in the morning and they had been sitting in the house.

"I would much rather have been Lorenzo in such a night," the young man answered, "than have written it."

CHAPTER VI

CAPTAIN DORSET did not row much. He rested on his oars, and watched the girl's fair face, as the moonlight lay softly on it like a veil of gentleness. He wondered why people made the stern seats of these sort of boats so unduly small, and whether, in the event of there being ampler accommodation in the present instance, the young lady would have allowed him to come and avail himself of it. He feared not; any way the discussion was purely academical, for there was obviously no room. After all it was perhaps as well; for had their united weight been in the extreme stern of this mere cockleshell of a boat, it seemed likely that the craft would have assumed the ridiculous posture of a swan searching the bottom of a pond.

Certainly Miss Eccleston was not very far off.

"We've no business to be out here all on our own hook," she observes presently.

"None whatever," he admits complacently.

"You think so too? Then let us return at once. Captain Dorset, would you kindly row immediately to the shore?"

"The coast," he declares gloomily, "is here most dangerous even by daylight; by night, what with sunken rocks and breakers—(you hear the breakers?)—and under-tows of various patterns, it is enough to appal the stoutest heart. Our only safety lies in remaining out in the middle of the pond."

They both laugh, and she does not press the question of return. After all it is not very late.

Round the banks lie broad shadows black and sombre; out here the lake is a mirror of dusky silver. Somewhere in the belt of shadowed blackness lies a fringe of reeds. Presently a breath comes from the warm fields, and sets them whispering.

"They are telling one another what the queen told them," says the girl, herself almost whispering. "Midas has ass's ears; can't you hear them?"

He does not answer, but dips one oar lightly, and almost without sound, into the water; he wants to move the boat so that the moon-shine shall fall more directly on her face. He does not care what frank truths his own face tells; it is in shadow, he tells himself.

A dog barks—who can tell where? but somewhere, ever so far off, whence the sound comes mellowed and harmonious.

"It sounds," she says, "a million miles away. And so everything seems! It is almost frightening; one seems to be utterly alone."

"Personally," declared the gallant captain, "I must admit that I'm not in the least alarmed."

She laughs; she makes scarcely any noise. It is, he thinks, as if a flower laughed.

"I meant," she tells him, "that it seems as if the world were empty but for us."

"That would be ripping," he asserts. Only as an afterthought: "It might be well to keep one clergyman alive."

She is rather surprised; it had not struck her in their brief acquaintance that he was so ecclesiastically-minded. She ponders his remark, and decides not to inquire into it.

"... As a merely temporary measure," he adds. And she at once feels that she was right in ignoring the permissive existence of the parson.

Again she stoops over the side and draws her long white fingers through the water. The small noise the plashing water makes sounds clear in the quiet night.

They are both silent. She is so near him, and yet she seems so far; so separate, so divided.

He knows he should not speak—not speak, that is, what he wants to say; and yet speech jostles at her portals as if bent on breaking out.

"How odd it is!" the girl says dreamily. "In all the world there is not one foot of earth that is mine: until I die I shall own no freehold. And yet all the lovely world seems mine."

He leaves her to say out her happy thoughts, unvexed by interruption. Perhaps her speech is vague and he scarcely follows her indolently told meaning.

"A man like the Duke of Shepply," she says, "scarcely knows what he owns. Twenty territories belong to him; but he belongs to none of them. With a score of castles in a dozen counties, one cannot have a real home."

The young man laughs: not sharp or loudly, but with a sort of large gentleness.

"I wouldn't mind," he says, "roughing along without a home if I had Farring Dene or Welby!"

She shakes her head.

"Please, understand! I know what belongs to *him*. But I would rather *belong to myself*."

He gazes at her as the witching light lies mystic, wonderful, on her fair face, and the silly words break bounds and sally forth.

"I wish to Heaven," he begins, "that you would belong to me!"

Her hands drop in her lap; her eyes meet his and almost chill him with their cold displeasure: but not quite. It takes a hard frost to freeze a torrent. And the words pour forth with all the vehemence and passion born of the place and hour.

Having in vain tried to stop the beginning, she leans back in her seat rigidly, and lets him speak.

It seems to him she scarcely even listens. In truth she does not listen; for a pause, for a chance of interruption alone she waits.

Then she speaks.

"We have known each other *five days*," she says, "and perhaps I like you as well as most other people I have known as long. Or I did. I cannot say it has advanced matters that you should suddenly go mad. *Marry you! Marry you!* You whom I met first on Monday! And this, what is it? Friday, is it not? Why don't you go in and propose to the Baroness Von Hagel, whom you first met to-night? That would be more striking still. Now will you kindly row to the landing-steps? You have certainly given me a fine lesson in discretion; one sees now why one should not have come out rowing on lakes with strange young men after dinner. Would you mind doing what I ask and rowing straight back?"

"You will not listen? You will not soften your refusal by any hope or condition?"

"Will you please row in?"

"Will *you* answer my question?"

Their eyes met straight in the moonlight, and hers are not more angrily aflame than his.

"Very well, since you insist," she replies hardly. "No, I will not listen. My refusal is straight and plain; I will not soften it by any 'hope,' as you call it, nor any condition."

He would give the world to keep her there. Apart from any forlorn hope of persuading her, for he has none, he longs to pour out on her a torrent of half-savage invective.

But she has appealed to her helplessness. And no decent man can help obeying when the command is thus put forth by one powerless to enforce obedience.

(*To be continued.*)

A TRAGEDY OF DUTY.

THE little village of Daignton lies inland from the coast about two miles, and the high ground that runs westward by the sea is a favourite walk in summer-time for the villagers. It was late autumn and a misty evening, however, when Mary Micklethwaite took her way thither, and there was no one on the road but herself.

The sun was already nearing the horizon as she came in sight of the sea; in the grey mist it hung like a ball of fire, making a red pathway across the water. The girl turned in among the furze bushes out of sight of the road, and, seating herself on a pile of stones, absently watched the ball drop towards the sea-line.

She was a perfectly unromantic figure, with a broad, good-humoured face and a thick waist, dressed in a purple gown, with red flowers in her hat. Presently, at the sound of a footstep brushing through the furze, she got up, and turned to meet a young man who a moment after came in view.

They shook hands awkwardly by way of greeting, and the young man said—

"I'm sorry, my lass; I'm afraid that I'm a bit late."

"Don't name it," said the girl. "I knew it was a chance if you'd get off."

They moved slowly towards the stones, and sat down side by side in an embarrassed silence; the young man made holes in the ground with his stick, and the girl pulled off her brown thread gloves and rolled them up into a tight ball in the palm of one hand. The young man spoke first.

"Well, Mary," he said, clearing his throat, "has your father anything different to say to-day?"

"No, Jack, it's just the same—it's all no use," returned the girl. "I suppose we must grin and abide."

"You told him about the place in Birmingham and all?" said the young man.

"Yes," said the girl sadly. "I put the best face on it I could, but he wouldn't let me say much. He's that mad to think I should want to have you at all, and when he's like that you can't change father, not if you was to crown him with gold."

"You told him we didn't mind waiting?" persisted the young man. "I dare say he'd think he couldn't do without you in the shop first off, but we're not particular to a few months, eh, Mary?"

"I never had the chance to tell him that," was Mary's reply. "He commenced calling me for what I'd done, and said I wanted to disgrace

him. He says I needn't think to go to the choir any more; he puts it all down to that. I shan't mind that much when you are gone."

"Mary," said the young man, suddenly and earnestly, "will you come in spite of your father? I don't see but what we should think of ourselves as well as of him. I'll go to Birmingham and get things ready for you, and I'll put up the banns, and you can come there to be married."

"Oh! Jack!" cried the girl, in great distress. "I couldn't go again father like that. Why, he'd never hold his head up more! You see, he's only got me now that mother's gone, and I don't know what he'd do in the shop. I thought we could get one of my cousins and I could show her about things, but to leave on a sudden like that——"

Jack was not easily to be turned from his point; he was slow-witted, as was the girl, but the pain of this had pricked him to a keener insight than hers. Mary was aware of nothing but the dull pain of parting; Jack had a forecast of the years to come. He put it to her bluntly, with the unconscious brutality of his class; they were young, her father was old—was he to spoil their lives in this way? A few years and he would be dead, and it would concern him no more, but they had two-thirds of their lives to live, and was it right they should be spoilt for an old man's whim?

Mary had no logic wherewith to meet this cogent reasoning; she had only a blind sense of duty to guide her. It had never come in her way to question her obedience to her father, and the idea now only frightened her.

"Doesn't it stand to sense?" cried Jack, in a last despairing appeal.

"Well, yes, it stands to *sense*," the girl allowed; "I don't know as I can rightly say all as I want. There's sense *and* sense, Jack. When father talks it's sense, and when you talk it's sense; and it's as if I'd like to do one thing and my conscience tells me to do another. I can't go again father—Jack—I can't indeed!"

There was little more said between the two as they took their way homeward. Outside the village they paused by common consent.

"Then I suppose it's good-bye, Mary?"

"I suppose it is, Jack."

They shook hands again awkwardly and separated.

Jack left for Birmingham early next morning without having seen Mary again.

Simon Micklethwaite was a person of consequence in Dainton. He was the owner of a small piece of land, on which were half-a-dozen cottages and the shop he himself occupied, the only piece of freehold not attached to the manor for miles around. There was no other shop in the village, and besides having a thriving drapery and grocery business "Micklethwaite's" possessed the only spirit license, and was the district post office. Simon himself was a hard-headed business man, much respected by his neighbours.

He had been elected poor-law guardian for the district, and folk said that, since he had sat on the board with the squire and the clergyman, he held his head higher than ever. If he had been the squire himself he could not have been more indignant at the idea of his daughter wishing to wed with the son of one of his own cottagers.

Jack Saunders had been a schoolmate of Mary's at the village school. For some years past he had been away, first serving his apprenticeship as a carpenter and then working as a journeyman at the same trade. Chance had given him a few months' work near his old home, and in that time the friendship between the two had been renewed.

After Jack had gone, Mary went back to her old life uncomplainingly. It never occurred to her to neglect her duties, or be "saucy with her meals" as a protest against the hardness of her lot; there was no shadow on her broad and kindly face to touch her father's compassion. Once, about a month after she had parted from her lover, there came a sore trial to her obedience.

She was stamping and sorting the morning letters, when she found one among them addressed to herself. It bore a Birmingham postmark, and Mary thrust it into her pocket with a guilty look towards her father. All through the day it lay there unopened, a heavy load upon her conscience, it is true, but a joy deep and thrilling as well, the like of which she had never known before.

When evening came, and she could leave the house for an hour or two unnoticed, it was towards the sea she went, to read her letter on the same spot where she and Jack had parted. It was then Mary felt that her father had laid a tax upon her harder than she could bear. If she might have letters such as this now and then life would be very easy, she thought, but there was no need to ask her father's consent to that; she knew too well what his answer would be, and to get them unknown to him would be well-nigh impossible.

Mary was simple and truthful by nature, and deception of any kind would have been painful to her; yet, perhaps, if it could have been done without her father's knowledge, she might have consented to this correspondence, for the gleam of hope that it held out was very sweet to her. But when she thought of the inevitable discovery, and the tempest of wrath she would have to face, she could not hesitate. That night in her room she wrote her answer to Jack, repeating that she could not "go again father," and begging him to write no more.

After this the monotony of her life went on unbroken. She formed a habit of walking out towards the sea on fine evenings, and sitting on the pile of stones where she and Jack had sat together for their last talk. Sometimes she brought her knitting with her, but more often she sat watching the changing colour of the sea, and the white-winged vessels passing to and fro.

It would have surprised her very much to be told that she was romantic, yet it is true that when she was not thinking of her school-

days with Jack, or of their shy courtship and brief spell of happiness, she was weaving impossible day-dreams of how her father might relent, or how Jack, become suddenly wealthy and famous, should come to claim her, with credentials that not even a landed proprietor and a poor-law guardian could deny.

It gave the girl a curious pang now and then to be shaken out of her dreaming by the passing of a pair of lovers in their evening stroll. She could not have told why the sight of this made her own trouble more present to her, nor why it was so impossible to take up the broken thread of her reverie. She knew nothing about self-analysis, and could only dry her eyes and hasten back to the village to get her father's supper, hoping the while he would not notice how the even red of her cheek had spread over nose and eyebrow.

Micklethwaite, for his part, was pleased with his daughter's obedience in his own hard way, and was at no trouble to consider moods and feelings.

Ten years had passed since Jack Saunders had gone to work at Birmingham, and many changes had come about. Jack was a good workman, and, after being foreman for three years, had been taken into partnership by his master. The firm was at work on some cottages they had had built outside the town as a speculation, and one of these Jack was finishing for his own occupation, for he was about to be married. He had only been home once in the ten years, on a five days' trip in Whitsun-week, and then he had not seen Mary, who was away visiting some cousins. Since then his parents had died, and his connection with Daignton had ceased.

Jack hardly knew himself how his marriage had come about; it was not altogether through his own volition. He had been lodging for some three years with a widow about ten years older than himself. She had been from the first almost embarrassingly kind to him, and Jack had resented many of her ways with the impatience of a man who likes to be independent. Fate had at last given him helpless into her hands with an attack of typhoid, and only her unremitting care had pulled him through.

The doctor was very emphatic in telling him that he owed his life to his nurse, and somehow it came to be understood that when he was well again they should be married. The new house was nearly ready, and if Jack lingered a little over the final details it was not from any real reluctance to fulfil his promise, but because his illness had left him disinclined to exert himself more than he could help.

At length, however, the house was finished and furnished, and Jack awoke one morning to realise that it was his wedding-day. There was a flower in the glass on the table which he was to wear in his coat, and his new clothes were ready on a chair, laid there by the careful hands of the widow. A loud, cheerful voice hailed him from below; it was the foreman of the works, who was to be best man, calling to him to get up.

Downstairs, the parlour was already being set out with the wedding breakfast, and Jack had the kitchen to himself for his hasty meal. There was a letter on the table which had been brought from the works ; the hand was unfamiliar, and he let it lie there till he had poured out some tea and helped himself to some rashers of bacon from the oven. Then he opened the letter, and propped it up against the teapot while he read :

"DEAR JACK" (it ran), "I write to tell you about father, for I suppose you won't have heard. He had the influenza very bad, and was buried three weeks come Friday. I would have wrote before, but my time as been took up with the lawyers. It all comes to me—there is very near ten thousand invested and three hundred in the bank. If you are of the same mind, as I hope and believe there is nothing in the way now, you can come and help me manage, I can't get on without. I wouldn't have wrote in such a hurry only they keep saying I must have a man. Father says nothing about it in his will—about marrying, I mean. I think he maybe thought better of it.—Your ever constant
MARY MICKLETHWAITE."

The widow had donned her wedding-gown, and the party was ready to start for church. She came bustling into the kitchen, and cried out in dismay when she saw Jack's untouched breakfast.

"Why, deary me! What ails the man? It might be his own funeral he was going to!" she said, in real concern, when she saw how pale he looked. Jack pulled himself together, and protested he was all right but he did not feel hungry; and as it was too late to make any further delay the widow had to be content with thinking that she would make him have a substantial meal afterwards.

Towards evening, when the wedding party had dispersed, and the newly-married couple were left in possession of their new home, Jack, had half-an-hour to himself, while Mrs. Saunders helped the little maid to prepare tea. It was then he answered Mary's letter. This is what he wrote :—

"DEAR MARY,—Your letter came too late. It came on my wedding-day. God help us both! I cannot say any more.—Your sorrowful
J. SAUNDERS.

"P.S.—My wife is a good woman."

J. T. KINGSLEY TARPEY.

A SONG FOR 1900

RISE, greater light, and arising, enkindle
Fires that were failing a little while since!
What if we suffered this Britain to dwindle,
Monarch and prince?

Here, when the strength and the infinite glory,
Waking anew, in the musical breeze,
Touch to fresh praise of her limitless story
Thundering seas:

Let the deep voice of invincible Britain
Cry with the laughter belovèd of God,
Fearless, her challenges, as it is written,
Armoured and shod,

Shielded, enpanoplied, sure of her honour,
Proud in the children she bears at her breast,
Worthy the love that they lavish upon her,
Blessing and blest,

As it is written, displacing the evil,
As it is written, desiring the good,
So that the force and the scorn of the devil
May be withstood;

Thus let it be: and though trouble, though passion—
Spite of her wisdom, her courage, increase—
Lies past this transient world and its fashion
Ultimate peace.

Therefore arise, greater light, to enkindle
Fires that were failing a little while since!
What if we suffered this Britain to dwindle,
Monarch and prince?

EULALIE

I

I CONSIDER Eulalie an epitome of all the virtues," declared old Mrs. Royston with a smile. Her daughter, seated in a recess by the window, nodded silently and sagely.

"An epitome of all the virtues, Helen. You are not old enough to remember her father's father, or her mother's mother. Such an odd couple. I laugh whenever I think of them! They moved in the quaintest surroundings. They never behaved like other people—they never looked like other people. Hand me that big red album over there."

The old lady's finger slipped quickly into the required place, and the book fell open. Her daughter looked over her shoulder.

"There they are, side by side, his father and her mother; one of Eulalie's grandparents each way."

"And what of the others?"

Mrs. Royston laughed lightly. "Oh, the commonest of stories. John Cameron's mother was always a weak woman; Clara's father was always a shiftless man. Both as handsome"—here the speaker pointed to the faded photographs before her—"as these two were grotesque, and both as silly as these two were capable. They were wonderfully clever even when they were most ridiculous. John and Clara, on the other hand, are people of no importance: just the result that often ensues from these queer marriages. You skip over a generation before you come to any one interesting again."

"Eulalie, from all accounts, is certainly interesting."

"The fact being that she unites to the wit of one grandparent the ingenuity of a second, and then adds to both qualities a personal charm drawn from the nonentity half. Her conduct towards those good-for-nothing parents of hers is beyond all praise. For the last five years and more she has practically supported them. . . ."

"Hush, here she is!"

As Helen spoke, the tall figure of Eulalie was ushered in.

"Eulalie!"

"How well the years have treated you! Why, it is quite an age since we met."

"And Helen, do you find her altered?"

"Altered? She is grown out of knowledge!"

Thus for some minutes the three exchanged a running fire of salutations. It was a very cordial meeting. By degrees the true Eulalie betrayed herself. Her active mind could not brook for long the com-

monplace discussion of nothing in particular, and besides, as any one, even the least discerning, must have seen, Eulalie was bent upon revelations—personal revelations. There fell to the floor the sable muff she had thrown on the sofa; she did not attempt to pick it up. Helen quietly moved it. Eulalie was a natural creature, and at this moment the conventions of society had no existence. Besides, was she not among her own people? She declaimed her opinions, therefore, with the animation that made her often oblivious of the fact that others might listen wondering, and altogether unconscious that she might create a bewildering impression.

"Yes, Aunt Gertrude, things have changed since you saw me last. I wanted to come and see you because some things need definite explanation, and I thought to myself that word of mouth is a million times better than all the screeds in the world. So I left poor little Cranmarsh this morning at 7.50, and here I am, behold! Well, you may as well hear the whole thing outright. I am going to get married. Gasp, if you like, and if it relieves you. I don't mind. I hate shams."

"But, my dear Eulalie, I always thought and expected, indeed I *hoped*, that some fine day you would take to yourself a partner for life."

"Oh, but—by the way it is rather like me, isn't it?—I forgot to say that I am going to marry a villain, and consequently the few people who have been told of it propose to go into mourning in advance of the accomplished fact. Villain or not, I am going to marry Hugo Dalrymple; I am going to marry him whatever you say or whatever any one else says; I am going to marry him whatever the world says, now or next week. And I want you to come to the wedding, for I assure you nobody else will be there."

And she set herself rigidly against the back of the sofa, looking first at the one, then at the other, with a strange, half-inquiring, half-scornful smile.

It was the old lady who spoke next, with nervous hesitancy. She was regarding the girl with admiration undisguised, but over her calm features a shadow of anxiety passed.

"Who *is* Mr. Hugo Dalrymple?"

"Who, indeed? I sometimes ask myself that question. 'You, Eulalie . . . throwing yourself away on a mere penniless adventurer . . . a creature burdened with nothing save the weight of his own conceit . . . you, Eulalie, of all people . . . to leap so boldly into the dark out of the light . . . a mere trifle, a characterless wreck of a man, a feeble thing among things . . . toss-up, catch-and-go . . . you, Eulalie Cameron, of all people in the world!' And that's how they go on about Hugo, my Hugo. How niggardly in their sympathies, how cruel in their affection, how short-sighted in their wisdom, can even one's best friends be! It is a very, very slavish world, after all: I don't wonder that some people never can walk straight in it!"

She paused. Helen, rather timidly, found her voice.

"It is a pity we don't know Mr. Dalrymple—then we might help you, or defend you, Eulalie."

"Kindly meant! But I don't want help or defence. If you like to support me you can, if not, you can stay away."

"Yes," Mrs. Royston interposed, "it is a pity we do not know Mr. Dalrymple."

Eulalie drew something in a paper wrap from the folds of her dress. She held up a crayon drawing to the light, turning it first to the one, then to the other.

The face was that of a dark-complexioned man. His hair was arranged with a regard to effect almost Tennysonian in its studied carelessness. The beard and moustache were not over-trimmed. The artist had clearly idealised the whole: a poetic disregard for anything but art had inspired her. The Hugo Dalrymple of the picture was a manifest genius.

"This is only the beginning," Eulalie explained. "I won't have one of your photographs. Where do you get the real soul of man or woman in a photograph? Take an old one, and tell me, Was it ever true to life? I don't believe it. Age withers them all. The human hand is the true revealer. That is Hugo. What do you think of him?"

A flush overspread the features of Mrs. Royston. "You did that yourself, Eulalie?"

"Oh yes; make any reservations you like on that account. What do you think of him?"

"But, my dear Eulalie, it isn't fair, really! And besides, a picture—even one of *your* pictures—conveys so little in the way of character. It is certainly a handsome face."

"Hugo is magnificent," said the girl proudly. "But if you admit him to be handsome without seeing him, the reality will astonish you. Handsome, however, is the last thing to be thought of in connection with him. As he says, quoting I forget whom, 'Nothing in the world is great but Man, nothing in man is great but Mind.' Hugo is *all* mind." She drew out her watch. "As you will see in a few minutes, for he will be here directly. I hope you don't object, Aunt Gertrude? I was bent upon introducing him to you."

The old lady smiled indulgently. Then the three waited for the bell to ring, turning to other topics rather half-heartedly. Mrs. Royston was deep in thought. She had not dared to speak the word of sympathy and encouragement which rose to her lips, for this fine, enthusiastic creature was just the one of all others to do some wild, impetuous thing; creditable enough to her heart, but fraught with what dreadful consequences beyond! The old lady ran over in her mind the names of several concerned in such ventures. Catastrophe had attended every one of them. And when the bell did ring, and the fresh visitor was announced, she hardly dared look him in the face.

He glanced round the room rather nervously. Eulalie made her introductions in a firm, decisive manner, and there was a ring of pride in her tone. Mrs. Royston, too infirm to rise, excused herself somewhat haltingly. Helen greeted the new-comer as cheerfully as possible. After this came an awkward pause.

The man himself bore a certain likeness to the picture drawn by the talented girl who believed in him, but unconscious flattery was marked in every line of it. Had the others never set eyes upon that admirable tribute, they would hardly have felt the stinging sense of disappointment which was theirs at this moment.

All the distinction with which Eulalie had endowed him vanished on near acquaintance. The dishevelled hair was mere untidiness. The general affectation of his looks and words was simply a pose. He was not even a clean-looking specimen of humanity.

Eulalie proceeded to draw him out.

"Mrs. Royston has heard very little about you as yet, Hugo. As my oldest living relative, she has a right to know our prospects. Aunt Gertrude is a person who will take a great interest in our future."

"Indeed she will," asseverated Mrs. Royston, as steadily as she could.

Dalrymple was lounging ungraciously in the chair provided for him. He did not appear in the least anxious to create a good impression. His whole demeanour was that of a man well satisfied with himself. And Eulalie hung on his every word.

"I am happy to say there is no particular need to talk about prospects," declared Dalrymple in a curious, drawling voice. "Eulalie takes me for better, for worse. I am not a man to talk without performing."

"We are so interested in dear Eulalie," Mrs. Royston replied, "that we want to know everything. Your work in the world, for instance, your line in life? You see she has taken us quite by surprise."

"The domain in which I labour is that of Art."

"How nice!" cried Helen. "Eulalie is so clever, and will give you such a lot of help."

Eulalie was blushing. "You mustn't talk of my poor efforts by the side of Hugo's, or in the same breath."

"Why not?"

"Miss Royston is right, quite right," Dalrymple observed imper turbably. "Eulalie understands perfectly well, I am glad to say, the distinction between the Art which lives of itself, and the Art by which life is sustained. My work is not of the same kind as hers."

"But Eulalie makes quite a lot of money; don't you, Eulalie?"

"Money!" said Dalrymple, with scornful emphasis. "True artists do not concern themselves with money. I labour for the future."

Mrs. Royston opened her eyes. "Money is a great essential," she said. "Doesn't it strike you, Mr. Dalrymple, that some of your views may be hard on your wife?"

"I hardly think I can discuss what may lead to misunderstanding," he returned stiffly.

"I only desired to show you that my dear niece's happiness is my first consideration."

The man's face clouded over. "Eulalie," he said, "I think we must be going."

Tears stood in the old lady's eyes. But she made up her mind to speak out bravely. "Mr. Dalrymple, before you go, there is something I must tell you! This dear girl"—she reached out to Eulalie and touched her hand—"this dear girl is worthy of more affection and more happiness than has been hers in life. Do not let me go within even a near distance of wronging you. I have seen little of you, but what I have seen does not satisfy me that you realise how hard life can be for a trusting woman. Eulalie has been strangely situated. Her talents she has used for her father and mother till now. If she decides to support some one else instead of them henceforward, she has a perfect right to do so. It is not any concern of mine. Things may surprise me, but I have no necessary right to interfere with them. But this much I must say, that I think you, as a man, ought to think twice before you prepare for a life in which the heaviest burden will fall on your wife. For that, I see, is your case at the present moment."

Something very like a flash of anger came from the man's eyes in response to the grave words just spoken.

"Oh, you are like every one else!" cried Eulalie. "You misunderstand Hugo; you misunderstand him horribly. A time will come——"

"Yes," said the man loudly and proudly, "a time will come——"

"I hope it may!" was Mrs. Royston's fervent ejaculation. "For my part I have said all I have to say. There, Eulalie . . . kiss and forgive me if I said anything to wound you. To-morrow—if it is to-morrow?"

"Yes, to-morrow is our wedding-day, Aunt Gertrude. But I might have known you would have taken it like this. As things are so——"

"As things are so, dear child, do not think me so heathenish as to want to refuse my countenance. I can manage it in a bath-chair. It may be rather a business, but I can do it if I make up my mind."

Hugo interposed, speaking almost sullenly. "No, if you disapprove, it is better for you not to come."

"Yes," agreed Eulalie, reverting to her earlier manner. "As if there were not enough of this miserable method of humbug in the world, that one's own relatives should fall in with it! For what is it but humbug when you pretend to hold opinions you don't hold, and belie by your actions the things you think truest? My dear aunt, do not let us encourage the dishonesty we see around us—far better to stay away, than actually assist at a ceremony you would like to prevent!"

Once again Mrs. Royston looked up at Eulalie admiringly. "Good-

bye, dear," she said, and kissed her. "If you think like that, I will not come. But if ever you are in trouble, then I do trust you will remember that here you have a friend."

Eulalie, lowering her eyes as though a little sorry, returned the kiss.

The two then left. It sounded as though Dalrymple was grumbling on the way out. But nothing definite could be heard. Mrs. Royston and her daughter discussed matters somewhat gloomily.

News was brought to them late the next evening that the wedding had taken place early in the morning; present—the curate, the pew-opener, and a stray church-cleaner or two.

The old lady shook her head, but said nothing.

II

EULALIE had been three years married before she would admit, even to herself, that her life was a wretched one. Her spirit had proved itself more than equal to the severe demands made upon it; and by degrees she had ceased to run the risk of destroying both physical and mental health by brooding over her daily disappointments. And then there was her work; there were her children. For those two the labour was always one of love. For them the future grew daily more important, daily her anxiety with regard to it increased, but daily she grew more vigorous in her application to the task of providing for their wants. Life was arduous, but it was life with various compensations.

To those who watched Eulalie Dalrymple in these trying times, her treatment of her husband was nothing less than a baffling enigma. Though she had removed herself from the circles which knew her before marriage; though communications with her own immediate family had come to an end with that event; though she devoted herself so completely to her work and her home; it was not an isolated existence that she led, by any means. The moderate success which still attended her artistic efforts rendered her an object of curiosity in a neighbourhood not overwhelmed with attractions. She was called upon by the ladies of the place, and only a certain dignity and reserve, never ungracious, saved her a host of unwelcome, time-devouring attentions. These were the people who made her behaviour towards her husband a topic of unfailing interest and wonder. Their own husbands were men who left them by a morning train and returned by an evening one; the interval being filled up by a monotonous grind on both sides,—monotonous, but perfectly straightforward, and entirely creditable to all concerned. The drudgery was complete, but duty was done, and bills, somehow or other, were paid. But what part did Hugo Dalrymple play in the economy of his own household? That was the question which agitated a definite suburban

radius at this particular period. Eulalie herself was perfectly conscious of the fact.

She was conscious also that new difficulties confronted her because of this very interest which had been aroused. It galled her to think that any one could look upon her with the eyes of pity. That there should be reason for it was a less intolerable grievance. Her bravery was considerable, but she was not brave enough to allow everybody to know the truth. "After all," she said to herself, "it is no concern of theirs."

Such was the condition of things when Hugo himself brought them to a crisis.

One winter afternoon he came into his wife's studio. She was hard at work, and looked up at him with a smile.

"What is that you are up to?" he asked gruffly.

"The light is going," she answered, "and I was just about to leave off."

"What are you up to?" he repeated.

"This is the picture I have been at, off and on, for years. I really think I shall be able to finish it at last. I could not work steadily at it, because—because so many other things were required of me. And one's best doesn't pay."

"The best doesn't pay—just what I always told you! Let me look at the thing."

He stood in front of it with critical gaze. Eulalie's eyes wandered to the other side of the room. Several little-used artistic "belongings"—an easel, on which was a half-completed outline—a portfolio or two—stood against the wall. They were Hugo's. He seldom touched them; the subject was a sore one with him, and his wife was always careful what she said to him. But she could not help the wistfulness in her glance.

He detected it at once.

"I know perfectly well what you think," he said roughly. "You think I have not touched my work, and that I am preying upon yours. Good Heavens, as though you couldn't see that all the world is in league against me! You women never have the slightest penetration. I should be industrious as any two men if I got the chance. You know that as well as I do."

"Well, Hugo, to tell the truth—don't be angry—if you did more, the end would come sooner! The lane may be long, but the turning is there, if only you would make the effort to reach it."

"You don't understand. You are like every one else! Appreciation is not a thing that grows on bushes, like gooseberries—once plant your tree, and the sun and the rain do the rest. Art has no concern with the public taste. It is such things as *you* do that get applause, and—and cash. What happened to my "Cold Virtue"? Wasn't that a composition to be proud of? And my "Grey Grief"? Rejection and abuse—that's all I ever got. Then I married you. I never have

elt the least inclination to compete with you and your daubs. Daubs! Daubs!"

The hateful word thus repeated brought the tears to Eulalie's eyes.

"I know, I know!" she answered. "But, Hugo, other men have to go through the same kind of thing, yet they come through it somehow. Even I—in my small way—have suffered from the same miserable feeling, that what is good is thrown aside, and what is bad, or merely mediocre, is granted an extra-special lease of life. I know what I have done are daubs. Yet they meant labour, long days and weeks and months of labour, to me; and you must remember that Algy and Mabel have been clothed and fed by the result. You ought at least to give me credit for that."

The words angered him.

"Such a reminder is humiliating!"

"But, Hugo, I meant nothing. Remember this! To me my own work, my own reputation, are as nothing compared with you. I want to see you famous; I want to see all the world looking up to you. Why, that is what I said when I married you. 'My Hugo must dazzle the world!' And you will yet. You must. You have it in you. Art wants you. There is a work to be done, and you must do it. Talent is so common, and genius is so rare. You have genius!"

As he listened to these words of glowing praise his manner grew visibly softer.

"Yes, Hugo, you have genius—and if the truth is thus cruelly denied, you must simply force the world to recognise it. Of course, in my own small way, I should like to shine; but it would be a rush-light to your sun. You don't know how I have prayed and hoped for the day that would see you hailed and duly crowned!"

He was gazing intently at her handiwork. A light of satisfaction had come into his eyes. And his tone as suddenly became light and amiable.

"You have one or two good effects there," he said, pointing to the picture.

Her face flushed as she caught the words of unexpected praise.

"But you want a touch here and a touch there. You have forgotten the first principles, of course; I doubt if you ever knew what they are. Oh, the difference between this and your other work is there right enough, I admit! Only you've done too much rubbish to be able to do the other thing. It's always the way. The only hope for you is to take an idea or so from me. I have never descended to the popular devices. That is how everything you do is vitiated. Even this!"

"Of course, Hugo, I know it is very likely. If only you would help me in any way!"

"If I did, it would be my picture."

The keen face was clouded over. In a moment she recovered herself.

"Yes—your picture. I agree. Why shouldn't it be? I would rather get praise for you than for myself."

The man's voice was harsh and cold. "There must be no misunderstanding. If I do anything to it, it is not only to be called mine, but it *is* mine. Were it but the least touch, I should give something of myself to it. What remains would be transformed, because I had touched it. My whole life has been given to the cultivation of a knowledge and a method which you would not rightly comprehend if I were to explain it to you. If I deal with your picture, it is a case of Art for Art's sake. I am not a man to talk without performing."

Whilst speaking, he had been striding up and down the studio. The words came fluently enough from his lips; but there was a curious inflation about them—they swelled as they reached their solitary hearer. Yet even so, she looked towards this husband of hers with the reverence of infatuation.

"I leave it in your hands to do what you will with it, Hugo. You know so much better than I do what is possible with regard to it."

"In the circumstances," he replied graciously, "everything is possible."

Making an excuse about the children requiring her attention, she slipped from the studio, leaving her husband alone with the handiwork which had cost her so many anxious hours, so much thought alternately tinged with fear and hope.

Hugo Dalrymple did not stay long in the studio. The light was waning to begin with. And the moment his wife was gone, an indolence not unusual to him crept over body and mind. He nodded once or twice to himself as he looked again at the picture. "If it goes as it is, it will do," he said to himself. "Ten to one she would spoil it if she did her 'finishings' as she intends. It would be rather a jest if my touching up resolved itself into leaving well alone—a thing she herself would never dream of doing."

He covered the picture up and left it.

During the night his resolution, which was all the more satisfactory to himself because adapted to his indolent nature, took shape. There was something contradictory to this in the fact that he rose early and made his way to the studio.

At the breakfast table, Eulalie, with fear and trembling, broached the subject.

"It is fixed up and ready to go," he answered.

"You have not been long."

"Long enough to make all the difference to the thing. I have given it a title, I have put my name to it, and I have sent it off. It is a piece of work—now—which the authorities will be found to look at. I may wake up to find myself famous."

Eulalie was silent.

Her husband's attitude was beginning to show itself in a new light to her. The three years had been full of wearing experience. If only

Hugo appreciated the drudgery, if only he realised how much she was ready to sacrifice for him! It was hard lines. This morning she felt miserable. And when Hugo, without a word, beyond saying that she was not to expect him till she saw him, left the room, her spirits broke down utterly, with choking sobs and blinding tears.

Not for long did she permit herself to indulge in the luxury of concession to feminine weakness. The day's work lay before her.

And this day's toil was followed by that of others. No change came over Hugo. Sometimes he went into the studio, toyed with his brushes awhile, came out again, and was seen no more for the rest of the day. Where he went did not seem very much to concern Eulalie. It concerned others, however, and before long the hints of well-meaning friends became torture to her.

Neither by word nor sign did she encourage them. "My husband is busy," she would say. "He has some important work in hand: that is what takes him up to town." Her tone was such that further discussion seemed undesirable, and consequently the gossips were forced to form groups among themselves.

Days went by, and with early summer came the opening of the Academy. The picture had been accepted, and was hung on the line. Beyond this, it attracted a great deal of attention.

The name of Hugo Dalrymple was now often on men's lips. He took the homage offered to him with the most admirable assumption of dignity. For her part, Eulalie was glad to see the change that came over him from this time onward. True, he was little altered as regarded herself. "It will come, it will come!" was her constant thought. "When he sees what I have done for him he will take courage, and do the work that is in him for all our sakes. As for the doubt they throw on his faith towards me, I never will admit it!"

That very day two letters came which altered the aspect of affairs in decided fashion.

The first was addressed to Hugo. On the flap of the envelope was the embossed device of a well-known Corporation, one which was famous for its encouragement of what was good in Art.

Eulalie opened it.

To the reader's astonishment, she learnt that the approval of the Corporation was to be manifested by an offer of a thousand guineas for the work "which had rendered the painter's name familiar to all lovers of the beautiful in the country."

Overjoyed, Eulalie telegraphed to Hugo's Club in the hope that she might catch him. The hope was not a very strong one, for she knew little of his daily movements.

The second letter was from Helen Royston. She wrote very briefly, saying that her mother was ill and in great trouble.

Eulalie wired back: "*Coming to see you,*" and started off at once.

She arrived at the little house looking radiant. To her astonishment

the old lady rose to greet her, looking much stronger than she ever remembered to have seen her.

"My dearest aunt, I thought you were ill!"

"I will explain, Eulalie," said Mrs. Royston severely.

"Is anything the matter?"

"Three years ago you were married, Eulalie Dalrymple. Three years ago I warned you. That you should have come here in response to the telegram from Helen shows that you still retain, what I always hoped you would retain, a sense of affection for us. For that I am very thankful, but I want to tell you at once that my illness and my trouble are only on your account. Things are going on of which you cannot be aware. It is my duty to tell you about them. You can bear it, I hope?"

"I can bear anything."

"Yes, I suppose so. Your husband is in the toils of another woman. Forgive me for putting it so bluntly."

Eulalie laughed a little cynically.

"Oh, Hugo? My dearest aunt, you mean it kindly, I know—but I can't listen to anything against Hugo."

"You must! Every one will know your secrets soon. I want to warn you that Helen and I are determined that your work shall not be used for so base a purpose as that to which it is being put. We recognised your handiwork at once."

"Hugo's picture?"

"Your picture. This is not an ordinary case of interference between husband and wife. If you like to give him the credit of it, well and good. But we have detected the truth, and you may be interested to know that Helen is a journalist now, and has only to set the ball rolling whenever she pleases. Do you understand me?"

"Hugo only requires help this once."

"There is a woman named Alastair. Every one knows it. Your picture is to be exploited for her sake. It is not a nice thing to talk about, but we do not live in very nice times. And that picture will bring in a lot of money. Are you content that she should have it?"

"The children——"

"Yes, I know! Eulalie, you have never brought them to see us."

"I have had a hard time."

"But you are a mother, and it compensates for most things, doesn't it? It cannot compensate for robbery and fraud. I wanted to tell you that we will tell the world that you painted that picture, if you will not say so yourself."

"I will go and see Mrs. Alastair. I will appeal to her. I will tell her it is my picture."

"God bless you, Eulalie! I always said you had spirit."

Returning home, Eulalie found a message from Hugo.

"Going up to see them about picture. Await my return to-morrow."

Eulalie waited.

In the morning came a letter from him. The blow had fallen. The man she had trusted with her name and fame told her that he considered them his own. "And I can do what I like with my own," he wrote brutally. "I go abroad, with sufficient money to complete the work which you and your presence only serve to hinder. When my fortune is sufficiently great I will make a suitable provision for you. Whatever the world may say concerning my talents, no one can say I am not generous."

Eulalie's courage did not even now desert her. The picture was gone, the money was gone, but her brain and her brushes were left.

III

EULALIE'S house was thronged with people. There were many reasons for her acceptance at the hands of society. She had attained a position in which her genius was universally acknowledged, with wealth sufficient even for the requirements of those who accepted her hospitality, among whom were not a few attracted by the fact that the brilliant woman was alone in the world.

This loneliness she herself affected to ignore. Nobody had ever heard her complain; nobody had ever known her to take up the attitude of an injured creature. Since Hugo's departure she had thrown herself with all the greater earnestness into her work, with a result which was astonishing.

Vague recollections of a certain nine days' scandal in regard to the picture which had brought her husband's name into prominence still lingered in some minds, for Mrs. Royston, through Helen, had been as good as her word. The world, however, soon loses distinct impressions, and even to-night people met and casually touched upon the subject.

"So strange that a woman should have such mastery over the brush as she has!" said one.

"It is, of course, a man's style and a man's power," another declared.

"Wasn't there some talk of him as a rising artist at one time?"

"Oh no, that is quite a mistake. He tried to trade upon her talents for a bit, but it did not answer. That is why there is no lord and master in this establishment. It's a case of—

"Oh no, we never mention him,
His name is never heard!"

That's so often the way with your people of genius: they don't seem to get on."

And the topic was soon changed for something more exhilarating.

Meanwhile, that strangely complex individual, Eulalie Dalrymple herself, was more than ever in pain, because of the mockery of these

lights and flowers, whilst the whole drift of her life was towards the darkness. She received her guests not with the usual smile and charm, but with an unnatural stare. Over and over again she made the attempt to pull herself together, but in vain.

"A lady wishes to see you very particularly, ma'am. I told her you were engaged, and had visitors, but she would take no refusal. She is in the studio."

"I will come, Mary," answered her mistress calmly. Her tone seemed to indicate that she knew by intuition what to expect.

Entering the large room in which a single light twinkled but vaguely, Eulalie, richly dressed as she was, made a curious figure by contrast with the shabby woman who sat waiting for her. This woman rose as she entered, taking from the floor, as she did so, a large package which rested against her chair. This she proceeded to undo.

"I am Catharine Alastair," she explained. "You have heard of me, I have no doubt. Most people have heard of me." So saying, she sighed heavily, and lifted to Eulalie a pair of eyes that still retained some of their brightness. But the whole face wore a sorrowful air, and the cheeks were very pale.

"What you have heard is mostly lies, believe me," she continued, "and if I were what no doubt you think me, I should not be in your presence to-night."

Whilst she was saying this, the coverings of the picture which she had brought with her gradually fell off.

Eulalie listened in bewilderment. As the picture came into view, the whole strangeness of the scene was forgotten. The artist in her went forth to the painter of this unexpected marvel.

The single figure of a woman, but a woman so expressed that she had taken upon herself the greater glories of humanity, composed the picture. Eulalie's gaze was drawn to it as though by some irresistible fascination, and as she gazed, it dawned slowly upon her that the figure was familiar. A little longer, and she knew that it was her own. Transfigured and idealised, but nevertheless her own.

The eyes of her visitor watched her narrowly.

"This picture your husband painted," she said at last.

"My husband?"

"He is starving."

"That is strange."

"Stranger still, perhaps you think, that he should make me his emissary? It is a strange world, that is the truth! You know what I have come for?"

"No."

"That is frank. Of course, I have come for money. He requires money. He is ill."

"Then I must go to him."

The other woman smiled in her strained, unnatural manner, and pointed to the picture.

"It is worth money," she said. Her voice was harder and colder than at first. "It happens to be my property. I cannot part with it unless I receive its value, which value I place at one thousand pounds."

"You shall have it," Eulalie answered quickly. "But how will it benefit my husband?"

"The money will go to him."

"Why?" Eulalie was gasping.

"Of course! You suspect! I might have known it!"

"His name has been coupled with yours before now. But I never believed what was told me."

The other woman made a dramatic gesture. "And now . . . ? Well! Do not let us waste words. Am I to take the picture away, or am I to leave it here?"

"Wait one moment!"

Eulalie left the room, went upstairs, and with a firm hand wrote out a cheque for the money. It was a large sum, but not too high a price to pay for this proof that her husband was a great artist. She was clinging to the proof of something else as well, that in the midst of all else there lay a deep love for herself within him.

She hastened down to Mrs. Alastair. "There," she said, "I ask no further questions. How Hugo laid himself under an obligation to you, I do not inquire. Tell him that I trust him, as I have always done. Tell him that this picture shall bring him the renewal of fame that he deserves. If there is anything to be explained, let him know that I am sure the time must come when he will explain it. Here is the money, Mrs. Alastair."

The answer came in a choking voice.

"He will be famous."

Eulalie's face brightened. "Yes, he will be famous!" She held out her hand with frank cordiality, and Mrs. Alastair took it with bewilderment. For a moment she paused, as though about to say something, then feebly faltered a "Good-bye." At the door she turned back, murmuring thanks. Eulalie only smiled.

When she was gone, Eulalie calmly turned down the one light which had illuminated their short interview, and rejoined her friends. It was, indeed, the old Eulalie that appeared among them. She was gayer than the happiest of her friends. Quick answers tripped from her tongue. Her heart experienced a strange rapture. She believed more firmly than ever in Hugo. That word "starvation" was an ugly one; but the money would put it far from him. How to reconcile the attitude of her visitor with innocence towards herself might have been a hard matter, but Eulalie obstinately preferred to think of this woman as an enthusiast, a fanatic, devoting her life to a struggling painter, whose method of work and life were far removed from conventionality, deliberately opposed to the accepted law.

So much the wayward Eulalie believed, and on that belief prepared herself to act. In a day or two she had proved her curious enthusiasm

and devotion by obtaining the ear of one of the wealthiest art-patrons in England. He remembered Hugo's name and work. Eulalie flushed hotly as he said that, and quickly turned the conversation into the channel of business. In the result, the picture was purchased. The sum agreed upon did not quite reimburse Eulalie for her own outlay, but the fact did not concern her. Very soon the paragraphists got hold of the news, and once again the name and fame of Hugo Dalrymple leapt to the lips of eloquent gossips.

As Eulalie went about her world, a happier one now than she had dreamt of possessing, she heard many things that pleased her. She was deaf, indeed, to some remarks which were said in a tone quite loud enough to be audible, but confessed to a strong sense of pride whenever the name of her husband was mentioned, a fact in the circumstances so curious that it silenced not a few ill-natured tongues.

For a time all seemed to go well. Hugo received commission after commission. Eulalie trembled, lest she should hear that he had failed to execute them. The fear was baseless, or so it seemed. Eulalie looked forward to the future with increasing hope.

When a name springs into prominence in the Art-world people are very apt to lose their heads. It is the same, perhaps, in all worlds: in the case of Hugo Dalrymple the phenomenon was certainly the more notable because painters and those who surround them are now and again bound to form cliques, in sheer self-defence. Dalrymple's name soon became the watchword of a school. But the "Master" himself had neither part nor lot with the Bohemian world, even in Paris, where he still remained. This fact increased the reverence of his followers, who argued that to be so far inaccessible was a proof of greatness; and the enmity of his detractors, to whom it gave the excuse to declare him a mere myth.

Eulalie heard the praise and ignored the scorn. It was at least certain that her husband must be numbered among the successful. Thus she was quite content to wait awhile for his return to home and duty. Her work grew ever more and more absorbing. With characteristic devotion she still placed it second to his, and worked on, supplying the place of mother and father as well to her children. People wondered what it could be that inspired her. A few were wont to echo, all unconsciously, the panegyric of Mrs. Royston.

One day the old lady was surprised by a sudden visit from Eulalie herself. She came into the room like a whirlwind. Every word she spoke showed the old Eulalie of days gone by.

"My dear aunt, I am off to Paris! Don't laugh, don't cry, don't do anything emotional, till I come back again. Then I shall give you all something to talk about, for I shall not return alone."

"Good-bye, Eulalie. You seem pressed for time. I mustn't keep you. Some day you will get out of the habit of paying these flying visits. I only hope it will be in my day."

"I am off in an hour."

"A safe journey, my dear child."

"And a retraction of your warnings when I reappear?"

"Perhaps."

A kiss, and she was gone.

Eulalie thoroughly enjoyed her journey to Paris in the *train de luxe*. Mrs. Alastair, looking worn and ill, a fact which was the more pronounced because her clothes were old, and even shabby, met her on arrival.

Eulalie's tones were excited, almost like those of a happy child.

Those of her companion were strangely subdued.

They soon ascended the narrow staircase that led to the meagre *appartement* in which Mrs. Alastair was passing her days. The coldness and gloom of the place had a curious effect upon Eulalie Dalrymple. Her blood ran hot and cold in one and the same moment. Her strong hopes were painfully mingled with unnameable fears.

Mrs. Alastair set refreshments before her.

"Eat," she said, "you must be hungry. Whilst you do so, I will expand what I have already told you in the letter that brought you here."

"It is a long lane," she continued, "which has no turning. I think the turning of mine, or perhaps I should say of ours, has come at last. You have shown a strange patience and fortitude, Mrs. Dalrymple."

"May I not say the same of you?"

The other woman smiled sadly.

"Some people would call you foolish for trusting me in the way you have done, but this room doesn't look very much like 'the roses and raptures of vice,' does it?"

"No, indeed."

"The money you gave me for the picture went, every penny of it, to him. He needed it. With its aid he has done wonders. In Paris they think him the greatest artist living. He has vindicated his reputation. If the cost is a great one for you and me, we must bear it."

"For you and me? What do you mean?"

"You will understand all in good time what I mean. Look round you. Look in my eyes. Look at my face. Do you see much sign of happiness there?"

The words fell heavily from her.

"No," returned Eulalie faintly.

"For him I have given up everything in the world. How strange it would be if you and I should be companions in adversity!"

"Explain yourself!"

"It needs so little explanation. Eat first, and then you will bear better what I have to tell."

"Impossible! What do you mean?"

Eulalie rose from the table and faced her.

"Have you brought me to Paris simply to mock at me?"

"That is unworthy of you! After all this time——"

"Tell me the truth outright!"

"So I will, if you will come with me."

"Is he dying? Is he dead?"

"No," said the other, with a curious smile, "he is not dying or dead. He is very much alive."

Eulalie breathed freely. "I will come with you," she answered.

They trod the lively streets in silence. All round them roared the life, glittered the splendour of the gay city. Mrs. Alastair led the way with a certain step, but a grim shadow had fallen on her face.

When they stopped, it was in a broad avenue. The houses were elegant, with the evidence of wealth and luxury on every hand. Carriages were coming and going.

"We are in very good time," Mrs. Alastair declared. "You see these fashionable equipages which are setting down so many people at that house? Your husband is very much at home there. The mistress of that establishment is a very beautiful woman. You see they are entertaining to-night. All Paris will be there."

Eulalie's face paled. "Who is the woman?"

"A year ago she was nameless. To-day she twists every one round her little finger. Such women are phenomena which perpetually recur. They stop at nothing. It is only another proof of her audacity that she has taken your name."

Eulalie gasped painfully.

"And you bring me to Paris to tell me such a story as this!"

"Yes, that is so. This entertainment is likely to be a gorgeous affair. Your husband and this woman are receiving every one. See, that is the carriage of the Comtesse de Rennes! Where she goes the most exclusive go. Monsieur is so talented! Madame is so witty! It is we who have put the man in this position; but where are we? We are outside, you and I—outside is the proper place for us."

Eulalie grew desperate. A thousand fancies flitted through her mind.

"I will go in and see if what you tell me is the truth," she cried.

She forced her way through the servants at the door. A brilliant crowd thronged the wide staircase.

They made way for her. They saw that she was distraught. It was a common instinct with one and all to make a scene impossible. In such a gathering the sudden appearance of the unexpected, the unprepared, the uninvited, must be met with composure. Thus it was that with polite expressions many a silken skirt was lifted daintily that Eulalie might pass by.

And there, at the top of the stair, stood a woman, tall in stature, of a rare beauty, receiving the guests. She was all radiance, all smiles. Eulalie hardly glanced at her, for beside her a man stood. It was Hugo. She gave a sudden cry, and fell senseless.

In that moment Hugo himself had taken in the situation. For once in his life he became alert and alive. He stepped down quickly, and beckoning to a servant, bade him help to lift Eulalie. Together they carried her up the stairs, past the still smiling hostess, who whispered something hurriedly as they passed into the farther corridors.

When they were well out of hearing Hugo spoke peremptorily to the servant.

"This is a mad woman, who is perpetually annoying Madame and myself," he said calmly. "See that she is given something which will revive her, and then take care that she is removed from the house as quickly and as quietly as possible."

Then he went back to reassure his companion, who showed her white teeth and resumed her most captivating smile.

Eulalie remembered nothing more till she found herself surrounded by a crowd of servants. She was bewildered, but in a few moments understood what had happened. A sympathetic voice fell on her ears.

"Madame feels better, I trust?"

"Let me go!" she cried, "let me go!"

In another moment she was out in the street again. She did not know where she was, for she had found an exit from the back part of the house. Galled and wounded, she wandered for an hour like one in a dream. Then, regaining the thoroughfares which she knew well, her senses gradually returned.

That was a miserable night. But when the morning came, she seemed revitalised. She found her way from the hotel where she had sought refuge, to the rooms of Mrs. Alastair.

"We have been deceived," she said. "I thought at first you had done this to humiliate me, but I feel it is not so. Do you swear that you have made these sacrifices in order to serve his genius?"

"I swear it," said the other, her head drooping.

"Let us make a bond together," Eulalie replied. "You are destitute; I live in plenty. My work is hard, but with encouragement I can complete it. When it is completed, he will return to me. Come and live with me, and help me to win him back again. Without your aid I feel that I shall droop and fail!"

"You are too good for this world!"

"Some day he will want help again. This is only a phase; he is not false at heart."

"You are wonderful."

They dried their eyes together, and prepared to leave for home.

"I have done as I said," Eulalie wrote to Mrs. Royston. "I have returned from Paris, and not alone. My friend, Mrs. Alastair, remains with me. . . . She is cruelly misjudged. She is one of the few people who understand my husband. . . . Whatever you hear in the way of gossip, do not believe. Hugo's reputation must always depend upon the devotion of others. As long as I live, and as long as Catherine lives, that devotion will not fail. . . ."

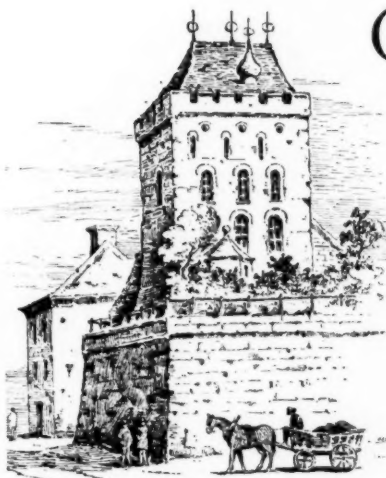
"Truly, an epitome of all the virtues!" said the old lady, with a sigh.

"Thank Heaven that such epitomes are rare!" replied Helen, without reverence.

MARGARET ARNOLD.

LETTERS FROM THE NORTH

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S.,
AUTHOR OF "IN THE VALLEY OF THE RHONE," ETC., ETC.



OLD TOWER, BERGEN

CARE AMICE,—You were good enough to accompany me as far as the Great Northern platform on my way to Norway. So far would you go, but no farther. In defiance of the old saying, "Where there's a will there's a way," you declared it impossible. Furthermore you extracted a rash promise that, as we could not travel together on this occasion, I would at least keep you posted up in all the adventures by road and rail, land and sea, that might befall me in the Land of the Midnight Sun.

That same midnight sun, by the way, was no longer visible, for August was well in. So much so that on writing to Bennett, the true "Cook" of the North in spite of imitators, and desiring him to take our passage in a mail steamer bound for Hammerfest and the Lofodens, he returned the reply that he really could not do it. The season was too far advanced; there was too much risk of discomfort. Cold nights, mists chilling to the bone, grey skies, and steady downpours—no end to the possible evils he predicted.

Hammerfest and the Lofodens were abandoned.

Not without regret. Years ago I had visited those islands, and remembered with what interest I had traced their sharp, volcanic outlines—so like the Dolomites that stretch across the southern country and sweep down upon Meran and all its romantic beauty.

Norway, however, as L. observed, is a land of possibilities, and if one scheme fails, another very quickly takes its place. He insisted that we should not give up this country of the old Vikings simply

because it was not advisable to visit Hammerfest and the Lofodens. The latter, after all, were depressing when the summer sun had passed its meridian; whilst, as far as he knew anything of the matter, Hammerfest was only celebrated for its smells.

This was rather aping the fox and the grapes, perhaps; but L.'s character is really largely made up of optimism. The moment one certain course of action is put *hors de combat*, he sees infinite advantages in some other plan, and at once transfers his enthusiasm.

For L. is nothing if not enthusiastic. At such times his words pour

out in a perfect torrent, tripping each other up by the heels, and making you feel breathless and bewildered. In 1898 we had journeyed to Norway together, and he left me neither rest nor peace until I had promised to repeat the experiment in 1899. L. lives up in the north, and declared it was only exchanging his daily latitude for something still more north; something better than a voyage due north to Hammerfest would turn up. Bennett was infallible, and would sketch out a plan of action even more successful than last year's.

Ever since that first visit to Norway it had frequently engaged his thoughts by day, coloured his dreams by night. Over and over again he passed through the loveliest scenes, awakened



MERIDIAN PILLAR, HAMMERFEST

to the thunder of gigantic waterfalls and the roar of swiftly-rushing torrents; such torrents as abound only in Norway, making the whole land echo and re-echo to the wild music of nature.

Nor was he far wrong in his estimate of Hammerfest. It is certainly a land of perfumes, though they are by no means agreeable. Here they manufacture hundreds of tons of cod-liver oil, and the whole air is filled with the odour. I remember well that on my first visit there years ago, every one, approaching certain spots, applied a pocket-

handkerchief to nose and mouth and took to their heels. There was nothing else for it. It is now said that cod-liver oil is useless in consumption, and would be interesting to hear whether the fell disease ever visits that little colony of hard workers amongst the vats of oil, which they stir with long poles until the smoke and fumes rise like incense upwards and spread far and wide.

There is plenty of consumption in other parts of Norway; and at Molde—Molde with all its romantic charm and beauty—we saw a large building where the new cure for consumption was being prosecuted. There were rooms in which the windows had been taken out, and immense balconies divided into cubicles, where windows had never been. The large grounds were divided into two parts, one for paying patients, the other for those who did not pay. Poor, pale invalids, men and women, of all ages, were sitting playing at chess or lying in long chairs covered up with blankets, or doing some feminine work to pass away the time. A few were reading, and some seemed too ill to do anything but lie and gaze at the sky, and wonder whether they were destined soon to take their flight to those far-off realms. It was a pitiful and sad sight, but no doubt each one was buoyed up with the hope that springs eternal, and thought himself on the high-road to recovery.

I also remember—to go back to Hammerfest—vividly as it had been yesterday—though twenty long years have come and gone since in the days of my youth I first visited those high latitudes—how, on lifting one's eyes to the far-off hills, there, on the dazzling snow, so pure and white against the background of blue sky, we traced a long line of reindeer majestically winding their way over the mountain tops and disappearing on the other side.

On revient à ses premières amours; nothing is truer; and with such pleasure do we revisit long-lost scenes; a pleasure all the greater perhaps that a grain of sentiment and two grains of sadness are mixed with the 477 grains of delight at the revival of the recollections of one's youth.

Two grains of sadness? In carefully reviewing the interval of years I fear those grains would be infinitely multiplied.

But it is not my purpose to enlarge upon the sad side of life, for there was no sadness mixed up with our present visit to Norway.

L. is the best of travelling companions. Everything you do is perfect; everything you propose is at once accepted. After all, one is but human, and to find yourself raised to the position of a pope, to be thought infallible without having subscribed to that awkward and impossible doctrine, is so much incense to the vanity that more or less lurks in every human heart. Say what you will, it sweetens life.

Bergen was to be our port of arrival. L. had promised to come down from his northern eyrie and meet me at Hull Station.

The train slowly and smoothly glided away from the King's Cross platform. You waved me good-luck and *bon voyage*, and never was kindly wish better fulfilled. Nevertheless, the beginning was so un-

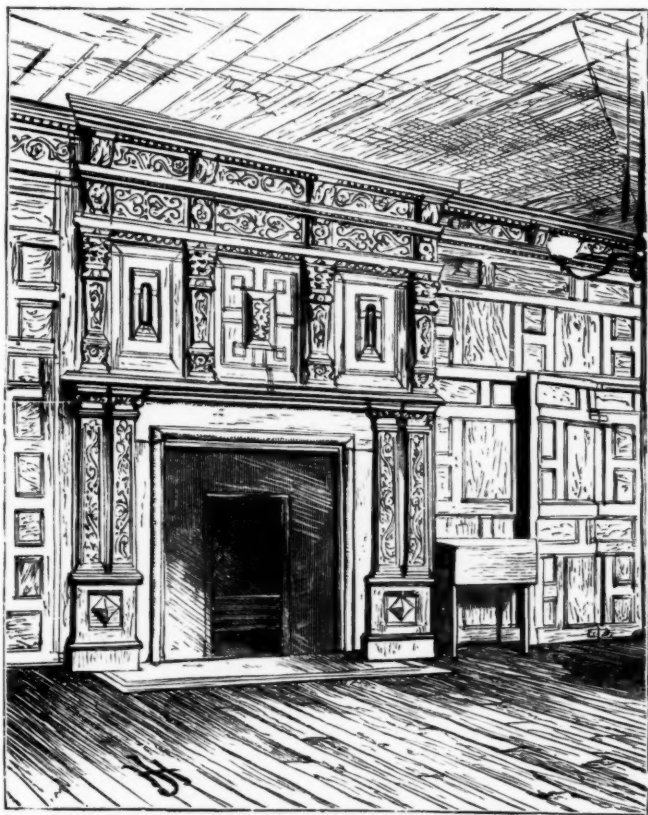
promising that I began to feel depressed. I was alone ; had not you on the one hand to keep in order, nor L. on the other with his optimism to point out that there was a good deal of blue sky above



OLD HOUSE IN HULL

the clouds. An hour out of London, and the country grew misty and rain was falling. "This is surely the break-up of the weather," I argued with myself; for you will remember what a long spell of unbroken days of sunshine we had had. "I ought to have given up

Norway and have passed over L.'s insistence. The fact of the Lofoden scheme falling through was sign and token that we were to go south, east, or west—any way but north. For if vanity lurks in every human heart, so does superstition. We have presentiments; and one presentiment fulfilled makes up for a thousand failures. We are



PANELLED ROOM, WHITE HART INN

for ever looking for signs and tokens, see them where they do not exist, and draw our inferences accordingly. How, indeed, can it be otherwise, surrounded as we are by mystery, knowing so little of the unknown and the unseen, ever trying for a moment to penetrate beyond the veil?

So, as the train rolled on, the rain fell faster, and a creepy mist

enshrouded the landscape like a pall; I became a prey to *les idées noires*, which, like jealousy, too often make the food they feed upon.

At last the train rolled into the Hull Station. There on the platform, sure enough, was L., with all the eagerness, buoyancy, and enthusiasm of his twenty-one years, all the commanding advantages of his six feet two of stature. Apparently he saw life from a higher plane than others; for he met me with a supply of "nods and becks and wreathed smiles," which ought to have made sunshine visible through the heaviest cloud.

"My dear L.!" I exclaimed, "what an untoward state of things! A deplorable break-up of the fine weather! Surely you don't recommend our persisting in this mad scheme?"

L. looked amazed. For a moment his countenance assumed a blank expression, then broke out again into wreathed smiles.

"I see!" he cried. "You are merely in fun. I really thought you were in earnest."

"But I am in downright earnest. What can be more dreary than Norway in wet weather? This is a warning not to go forward."

"Bother warnings!" cried L.—forcible if not elegant English. "Here we are off for a holiday. I feel as free as a bird of the air, and as happy as a salamander in an oven seven times heated. To turn back would be to fly in the face of Providence. Porter! see to this luggage."

There was no resisting that towering form and commanding voice. I meekly submitted, putting presentiments, signs, and tokens into the background. The porters flew to obey L.'s orders. It is a way he has with him, and they look as if they thought he was doing them honour. You had a little of that about you, if you remember, when you used to put on your Napoleon manner in Spain, but then you hadn't six feet two to carry it off. That makes all the difference.

A large waggon was in waiting to carry off the luggage of those who preferred to walk from the station to the boat. You have never chanced to go to Norway; you don't know Hull. Of all the unhappy and unpicturesque places, of all depressing towns, it is the very worst. One redeeming feature it has—its magnificent parish church, the largest in England, with the exception perhaps of Great Yarmouth. When my old friend Canon McCormick was vicar of Hull, it was a delight to attend the services, which were in every way admirable. Never had finer form filled the pulpit, or more splendid voice reached to the farthest corner of the most distant aisle. But for me the glory has departed. Others reign there now to me unknown.

I am doing Hull an injustice. Instead of one redeeming point, it has many. If you take the trouble to investigate the old town what interesting relics and monuments of bygone days will you not find! There is the old King's Head in High Street, a timber and brick building once an inn, but now turned into offices. Here it is said some of

the old kings of England lodged when they came to Hull. As far back as three centuries ago it was celebrated for its cheese and its ale, and "you have eaten of Hull cheese" was a proverb that politely insinuated you had taken too much ale.

The White Hart is another ancient and interesting house, both within and without. Its doors are especially heavy, and its staircase is of massive oak; oak panellings of great beauty adorn the rooms, and one of them is called the plotting chamber, though what plots were hatched here seems to be unknown. It is an old house full of strange turnings and passages, and secret doors and separate entrances which are certainly suggestive.

Hull has its historical records like other ancient towns. At one end of High Street once stood the Old Chain House, which held a chain that every night was stretched across the mouth of the river Hull to protect the harbour.

Just beyond this is the old archway leading to Blackfriars Gate, close to which in days before the Reformation stood the monastery of the Order of St. Augustine or Black Friars, founded by Sir Galfrid de Hothum in 1314. Here we are in the neighbourhood of strange names: one is

Blanket Row, which suggests that three hundred years ago Hull was famous for its woollen trade; next we have the "Land of Green Ginger," which no doubt has also a commercial interpretation; a little beyond we come to Whitefriars Gate, where once stood the monastery of the Carmelites or White Friars. Just outside the Market Place is the Grammar School, founded in 1486 by John Alcocke, who



ANCIENT OAK STAIRCASE,
WHITE HART INN

was successively Bishop of Rochester, Worcester, and Ely, and which once had the father of Andrew Marvell for master; at the same time he was Master of the Charter-House and Lecturer at Holy Trinity Church. Hull owed much to Andrew Marvell, who was member for the borough in 1658, and was noted for his fearless honesty. His poems were famous in his own day, and still survive—you, for example, are very fond of quoting them.

Perhaps the crowning glory of Hull is its Parish Church, to which I have already alluded, and you who have every church of note in



ANDREW MARVELL

England, seen and unseen, by heart, need no description of this splendid building. But a great part of Yorkshire is famous for its fine churches. These vestiges of the Middle Ages, however, as far as Hull is concerned, have to be sought out; a first impression of Hull is altogether against it. You seem at last to have reached the very perfection of depressing hideousness, and hurry through the streets on your way to the boat as though the air were fever-stricken.

So went we that memorable day, for we chose to walk. For a brief interval the rain ceased, but the streets were a perfect slough of despond. Do you remember one awful day we once had in Spain in the town of Manresa, after visiting Montserrat? I thought that was going to be a second deluge, but these streets were even worse, and with no romantic outlines, no subtle influence of Ignatius Loyola and his times lurking in the atmosphere.

The atmosphere of Hull was painfully prosaic and commercial. But many a time have I trodden them on my way to Norway, and so in a sense I love them. They attract almost by their very hideousness. And all the while there is the feeling that they will very soon give way to the broad waters and splendid air of the North Sea, at the end of which lies that land of lands.

The rain had temporarily ceased, but the clouds were dull and lowering, and as we picked our way through the mud, we glanced every now and then at L. But there was not the least sign of hesitation or relenting on his part; he was as merry as a sandboy, and when we passed on to the quay where the tender was waiting to

convey us to the steamer, he fairly threw up his hat, and behaved altogether in a manner unbecoming the dignity of six feet two.

Cabs drove down, the waggon piled up with luggage struggled up alongside; the little tender was soon crowded, and presently we found ourselves on board that tub of tubs, the old *Orlando*. One feels as if she had been running for a century, and ought now to be superannuated. But one day a bright idea came to the owners to lengthen her, and as they could not broaden her at the same time, she now looks like a vessel that had outgrown its strength. The consequence is, that in choppy waters such as the North Sea delights in, or in the longer rolls one meets with by way of variety, she has a motion as peculiar to herself as it is disagreeable and effectual. I will not trouble you with more graphic details, remembering the state of prostration in which I have occasionally seen you in other waters. Suffice it to say, that the vessels plying to Bergen, are not worthy of this age. Competition is needed, and I am convinced that if an opposition company started with magnificent steamers from London to Christiania, and from Hull to Bergen, they would carry everything before them. As it is, the fares are high, and they have a way of including the charge for living in the passage-money, and as half the time people are unable to sit down to meals, one feels that the system is all in favour of the steward's ledger.

All the luggage was on board and all the passengers, when an hour or two after the appointed time had struck we set sail, or rather we steamed away. For "setting sail" will soon be an obsolete phrase, sailing vessels become as extinct as the Dodo, and the sea will have lost its greatest ornament. It is a relentless age, and you, I know, with your artistic temperament and love of the beautiful, mourn all this decadence.

We steamed down the Humber, mentally giving three cheers for weighing anchor. The unromantic outlines of Hull looked almost weird and charming, as they wrapped themselves in mist, dissolved and disappeared. On the opposite side Great Grimsby's flat shores were just visible. Great Grimsby, where the fishing-boats put in with their live cargoes, some of them having been "norrard of the Dogger-bank," which plays a conspicuous part in the Mission to Seamen.

One familiar spot and point after another was passed and left behind. For a short time we thought we were going to have a sunset—the clouds broke, a streak of crimson shot across the sky, but, like the mirage in the desert, it was delusive. The sun did set, but we saw it not.

Our quarters on board were on the lower deck, therefore uncomfortable, though not crowded. L. had a cabin for four all to himself; I had the same.

That night we were able to dine quite comfortably. There were very few absentees. We retired to our respective dormitories—in which, as L. said, we might hold levees—hoping to wake to sunshine

and clear skies. The night passed. In the early morning we woke to a subtle change—in the vessel, in the sea, in ourselves. The motion was extraordinary. That fearful night you and I once passed, crossing



IN THE HUMBER

from Barcelona to Majorca—when I searched so long for you and at last found only a shadow, gazing over the bows of the vessel at the cruel sea—was as nothing compared with this. The good ship now

rolled, now pitched, now did both together, now seemed to spin all round, producing what my old tutor used to call an obfuscation of



QUEEN'S DOCK, HULL

intellect, wherein one ceased to be a rational and responsible being. Getting up in the morning is always the *mauvais quart d'heure* at sea,

and the subsequent walk on deck is like a restoration to life. But on this occasion the walk had to be postponed. You could not tell whether the next moment would land you on your head or your heels. Few passengers were visible, and those few looked very limp and dissatisfied with themselves as they lay back in their deck chairs. Yet to my surprise the sea was not very rough. It was a little choppy, and had a slight swell upon it, but a vessel that had not outgrown its strength would not have made a tenth part of this commotion. The skies were not blue, and yet there seemed a promise of clearing by-and-by.

We sat down in the nearest chair and waited for L. and the breakfast gong, which by the way was an aggressive bell. Both tarried, and both arrived simultaneously. L. had lost his enthusiasm and *verve*: looked pale and surprised: surprised at finding he was not in his ordinary fine form: he who had so often braved the narrow water between Dover and Calais in impossible seas, and proved himself the one survival of the fittest. I inquired after his health—a somewhat cruel kindness, I always think, under the circumstances.

"Thank you," he replied, "I can't say that I passed the night exactly in paradise. The motion was very queer. I kept dreaming all night long of sea-monsters and yawning caverns; the sea swallowing me up in great depths. But I shall be all right after breakfast. There went the bell, I suppose."

But there was a half-heartedness about him that rather belied his words.

We went down to the saloon: more people had assembled than we expected, and the stewards were running to and fro. But here the motion was far more eccentric and perplexing than on deck; and now a cup of tea went sliding over to its opposite neighbour, now poached eggs parted company with their plate, and occasionally there was a simultaneous rush of crockery and ironmongery to one common centre. One by one the passengers got up and glided away with that uncertain movement peculiar to such occasions, until at last in the whole saloon only four of us remained. Many of them never again appeared until we were safe in Bergen harbour.

Before breakfast was over L. also gave up the struggle, pretending that in the saloon, like Lord Bateman in prison, he felt too close confined. We found him presently on deck lying back in his chair. The sun and blue skies had now really appeared, but the vessel if anything was behaving more eccentrically than ever. Chairs every now and then went sliding down the deck with a decision of purpose which landed their owners in very undignified positions, so unexpectedly that before you could take precautions the mischief was done.

At last the decks, like the saloon, were almost cleared. L. was lying at full length in his chair in the broad sunshine. He hadn't moved hand or foot for some hours. One half the face was exposed to the sun, the other half was in shade: result—the sun became so

burnt in as to make him for days afterwards like a clown's jacket—one side red, the other white. When the luncheon bell rang—a true satire upon the passengers—some called it an insult—he had not moved for hours. If occasionally the eyes opened and caught my glance, there was no sign of recognition as they immediately closed again. I went up to him in some concern.

"My dear L.," I said, "how are you feeling?"

No response. He might have been a marble image. I was seriously alarmed. People sometimes succumb to atrophy, failure of the heart, anything expressive of extreme weakness. I tried again.

"Food is absolutely necessary in these crises, my dear L. Can you manage a little luncheon?"

No response. This was getting beyond a joke.

"If you hear me, if you are conscious, give me a sign; move your little finger."

No response. I fired my last shot; if it failed I should give up hope.

"Are you equal to a whisky and soda? If you hear, move a finger."

Ah! that was better—the whole hand was violently agitated. Whisky and soda had brought him back to life. Pending its arrival L. prudently reverted into unconsciousness. I went down to luncheon. Only one other passenger kept me company; a *solitude à deux*, with a crowd of stewards to wait upon us.

As the day wore on clouds again gathered, and presently the rain was coming down in torrents. Once more depression took possession of me, and there was no L. to communicate enthusiasm and pour out his volumes of words in propagating optimism. He was still indifferent to all earthly influences. We had met an old friend on board the tender at Hull. It was Mr. C., indeed, who had formed our *solitude à deux* at dinner. He was crossing over for fishing, and landing at Stavanger, where we were due at midnight, long after L. and I had retired to our spacious cabins.

Fishing had been bad in Norway for some time. Like the proverbial farmer, no one was satisfied. In some parts they complained of too much water, in others of too little. Here a river was in spate, and there it was nothing better than fishing in a puddle. But fishing in Norway is not what it once was. Where, indeed, has it remained so—excepting in preserves possessed by fortunate landowners, where poaching is a dead letter or is severely dealt with? Scotland is not what it was, and even Norway is becoming a shadow of its former self.

Mr. C. landed in a steady downpour of rain, such as Norway too often delights in. The clouds there are not given to half-measures. We were sleeping the sleep of the just, and did not turn up to speed the parting guest; but our steward informed us the next morning that he had almost floated off the boat in the ceaseless storm. "Umbrella, sir?" said the steward. "It would have battered in the strongest

umbrella that ever was made; and it ran off the gentleman's mackintosh like a perfect river. In fact, sir, he remarked to me as he went off and I followed with his handbags, that, instead of going for fishing, he was evidently being turned into a fish himself."

The boat stayed here some hours and then went her way towards Bergen.

When we really got up the next morning we were in comparatively calm waters. L. was himself again, and fortunately so was the weather. Blue skies and a brilliant sun chased away all vapours from the mind, and life seemed once more worth living.

The journey from Stavanger to Bergen under sunny skies is full of charm and interest. You are for ever passing upwards through an interminable sea, steering through countless rocky islands and promontories. Rocks of every form and shape, of a colouring that is indescribable, are for ever in sight. A soft purple haze envelops the more distant, whilst those near at hand seem to have borrowed some of the exquisite shades of the rainbow. The clear calm water through which the good ship is ploughing its way is equally beautiful, equally full of light and colouring. There is a radiancy in the whole atmosphere again suggestive of the rainbow; no other word will describe it. All colours here are vivid and intense. The lichen upon the purple rocks is of a pure, fresh green elsewhere unknown. Man is essentially a creature of influences, and all this is reflected upon the mind. Melancholy in Norway is non-existent, excepting to a diseased imagination beyond all human remedy. Here and there on our present course we passed a settlement of Norwegian houses—those small wooden houses painted red and green and white; delightfully clean and fresh; bright patches of colour in the smiling landscape; making all other countries after Norway look dull, gloomy, and heavy. Who can forget his first impression, say of Hull and good old England, when landing after a month or two spent amidst the laughing hills and valleys, the rainbow atmosphere of Norway; the gloom and ponderosity and grimness of the houses after those light and smiling tenements, which look as though they had been erected yesterday, with pines fresh from the forest? They all look as if they had sprung up in a day, those shanties, so light and airy are they, so pleasant to dwell in. These settlements all add to the picturesque element in the journey from Stavanger to Bergen.

Stavanger itself is one of the chief towns of Norway, and is rising and improving. Its church stands next to that of Trondhjem in interest and antiquity. The first church was burnt down in the thirteenth century, after an existence of over a hundred years. Some of that early building has survived, and has been compared with Winchester Cathedral; a similarity due to the fact that the architect was Reginald—or Reinhaldr, as the Norwegian poetically gives it—a Benedictine monk of Winchester, who was first Bishop of Stavanger, and died in 1135.

King Sigurd Jorsalafarer had furnished him with the means of sending

for workmen to England. It was to some extent a case of bribery and corruption. There is nothing new under the sun. Sigurd had put away his wife to marry a younger and fairer woman. Again history repeats itself. Reinholdr as bishop refused to sanction the new marriage or to perform it, and his consent was at last obtained only by Sigurd's promising to pay a sufficient sum to build the cathedral. It was dedicated to St. Swithin—a very appropriate dedication for rainy Norway, and an arm of the saint was sent as a precious and holy relic from the cathedral of Winchester.

In 1540 it was robbed of its treasures; about the year 1750 they thought they would improve upon Time's exquisite tone by vigorously whitewashing the interior; and in 1867 the whole was restored. The chancel is Gothic—Early English—whilst the nave, which survived the fire of 1272, is a very fine Norman. Norman also are the north and south porches. The fine old oak pulpit was carved by Lawrence Smith, a Scotchman, about the year 1750. But I need not tell you that everything pales before our Spanish experience.

Never shall I forget an evening I spent there years ago, waiting for the steamer.

I had come down from the neighbourhood of Bredvik, where the salmon-fishing had been unusually good that year—far better than it ever will be again. Those were not the days of flocks and herds of the genus tourist which, as far as Norway is concerned, have multiplied at compound interest in the last ten years.

We were a party of four, only one of whom now remains to tell the tale. All have gone to their last sleep; lives cut short ere the sun of each had reached its meridian. We seemed to be the only Englishmen in the place waiting the boat from Bergen.

It was evening, and a glorious sun was sinking westward. I had obtained the key at the fire-station (where it still reposes), and with some difficulty had persuaded the others to visit the cathedral. Sport, they laughingly declared, was more in their line than architecture.



NORWEGIAN COSTUMES

We strolled up the narrow hilly street, which we had almost to ourselves. Daylight was beginning to wane as I opened the door, and we all passed into the impressive silence and solitude of the empty church. The Norman arches stood out in all their grandeur, softened by the gloaming.

I don't know what it was, and I never shall know, but as we walked up and down the aisles, scrutinising and criticising the architecture, noting the fine zigzag ornamentation on the arches between the pillars—here and there replaced by the old Norwegian and interesting dragon-tracery; as we walked about, I say, contemplating both minute detail and general effect, a sudden strange feeling came over me—a sensation or conviction of not being alone; of some other presence being there though unseen. It thrilled me from head to foot with an emotion never before experienced.

I glanced at the others. Two of them seemed absorbed in the building, and in that alone; the third, Sir John D., youngest of us all, was evidently under the same strange unseen influence. His face was pale; his eyes seemed looking into vacancy. He used to say that he had the gift of second-sight; and his mother, old Lady D., was descended from a long line of ancestors who had all believed in and possessed the faculty to the point of superstition. She is still living, though her boy, as she would fondly call him, has been lying for twelve long years in the private chapel of the old castle. They were Scotch of the Scotch.

As I looked at John his eyes met mine, and we saw that each was conscious of something withheld from the others.

He quickly linked his arm in mine, and separating from the others, we went up the long aisle towards the communion-table.

"The place is haunted," he whispered to me; "do you see nothing?"

I shook my head. "Do you?" I asked.

"Look," he returned, and linking arms still more closely, pointed down the aisle we had just traversed.

Whether that linking of arms in some way communicated his power for the moment, certain it is that as I looked, I seemed to see the outlines of a shadowy form, whilst a hand appeared to hover over the heads of two who were standing in the aisle, the other hand pointing at us.

"It is pointing at me, not at you," said D.; "I saw it when we all stood together, and the hand carefully avoided you."

"But what does it mean?" I asked, and as I spoke the ghost, or apparition, or whatever you may choose to call it, seemed to fade away.

"It means death—doom—fate; a warning, whatever you choose to call it. Not necessarily immediate; in fact, I should say some years might elapse first; but we shall all three die young, and all within a little time of each other. I shall be the first to go, for the hand first came to me; but the others will not tarry long after me."

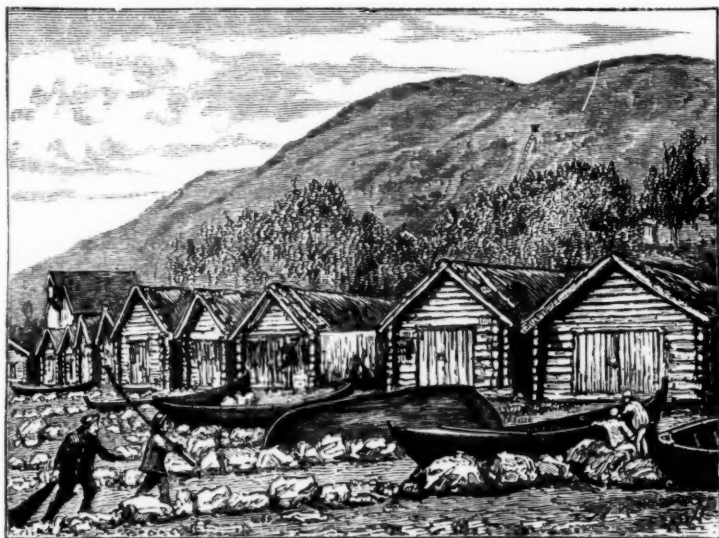
He spoke in the calmest of tones, as though he had been making

the most commonplace remark, but it was a forced calmness; I could see that inwardly he was deeply moved.

Well, it passed away, the vision of that evening in Stavanger Cathedral. The gloaming had deepened, and when we left the church a red afterglow was flushing the sky, and feathery clouds tinged with red were floating about, for all the world like angels' wings.

"They are spread," whispered John D., "but the day will come when other wings of the dread messenger will be folded, and I shall be summoned." Yet he was not at all given to sentimentality.

A few years did go on, and then, just as he had predicted, and in the order he had indicated, came the end for them all.



NORWEGIAN BOAT-HOUSES

You ask me what the ghost was like? I can hardly tell you, it was so dim and shadowy, so insubstantial. The most visible part of it was the hand that seemed to float over their heads, and the finger that pointed towards us. It may have been the ghost of some old viking, or of Reinhaldr who absolved the erring Sigurd, or of Sigurd himself, who built the cathedral with conscience-money. Some poor ghost still haunting the church for a crime committed in the centuries gone by. But whoever it was, whatever it was, Sir John, with his faculty of second-sight, saw more than others, and understood what he saw.

All this you say is a digression, but memory, that mysterious faculty

of the mind, is never dormant, and the mere writing of the word Stavanger brought back vividly, as though but of yesterday, that past and painful scene of twenty years ago.

"A sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier days." In youth sorrow may be a luxury, but in later years it is a pain and nothing but pain.

But to return. The good ship ploughed her way through the sunny flashing waters, turned points and rounded promontories and shot up between rocky islands, where occasionally sheep browsed, and here and there a fishing-smack was fastened to a buoy, and a fisherman's cottage on the shore gave a little life to the otherwise desolate expanse. Over all the sun poured his gladdening beams; the sea was calm as a mill-pond; we might have been a painted ship upon a painted ocean. Here and there a quaint little lighthouse reared its head upon some point, and the keeper came out and took stock of us through his glasses, and dismissed us with a wave of the hand.

D. was himself again. All his enthusiasm had returned, his torrent of words, his delight in new scenes; and scenes above all connected with *Gamle Norge*. The voyage was now so charming that we did not care how long it lasted; and when at length the massive hills of Bergen rose up before us, we saw them almost with regret.

Then presently we rounded and passed into the wonderfully picturesque harbour, with all its restless flashing life; vessels and ferries constantly darting to and fro: a movement that never ceases. In the background lay the town, with its crowded quays, its spires and towers cleaving the sky, a multitude of red and grey roofs colouring the scene; and beyond all the massive hills—hills which make Bergen the most rainy town in Norway.

It was not one of Bergen's rainy days; the brilliant atmosphere, on the contrary, suggested that rain and dark skies were here unknown.

I never set foot in Norway without a certain thrill of emotion never experienced in any other country; is no doubt partly due to past recollections, is partly derived from the mesmeric charm that *Gamle Norge* possesses for all those who are acquainted with it. To know Norway is to love it, though the crowds that flock to its shores year by year in greater number are doing their best to destroy the charm.

Nothing, however, can injure the broad outlines and splendour of the country; nothing can take from the beauty of its endless forests with their vast silences; the majesty of its interminable hills and valleys; the overwhelming effect of its rushing torrents, streams, and waterfalls. Nothing can deprive it of its matchless fjords, those vast inland seas, as they may be called, through which you may travel as it would seem for ever; scenery that embraces every phase and aspect of nature, from the glistening snow-clad hills, the vast and ever-moving glaciers, the rushing waterfall, to rocky mountains where tree or shrub never grew, and hills that are covered with the most luxuriant verdure that ever gladdened the eye of man.

So to-day we set foot in Bergen with the same thrill of emotion as of old, glad indeed to say good-bye to the wretched old tub that certainly had brought us safely over the seas, but by no means agreeably.

I have always stayed at Holdt's Hotel in Bergen, and every time declared I will never do so again; but the puzzle is how not to jump from the frying-pan into the fire. Years ago it was, with the exception of the Victoria in Christiania, the pleasantest hotel in Norway. Those were the days of old Holdt, who treated his guests with princely liberality, yet retired with a comfortable million.

When he retired everything changed for the worse. Last year it reached its lowest, most uncomfortable stage. This year the management had again changed and things were better. It is darkest before dawn. When I spoke to the waiter, who had been there a quarter of a century, about the old days and the admirable ways, the tears came into his eyes, he shook his head mournfully, and slowly went away; his heart was evidently too full to speak of what had been. "A sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier days"—I have just quoted it. I don't suppose he ever heard of Tennyson, much less read him; but we all go through the same experience, the same phases of thought and emotion; the only difference being that one writes them down and another does not.

How well I remember my first visit to Holdt's! A. was then with me, with all his fun and wit and humour, which I have never heard equalled. He overflowed with vigorous life and health; yet he too has gone to the silent land, a life cut short. Over his grave a broken column might well rest.

We had come up the Spirillen together, with the brother of Ole Bull and Miss Bull, both very charming people, but eccentric and original. We journeyed together for some days and they added much to our pleasure. He talked incessantly, was never still for an instant, seemed to have quicksilver in his veins instead of blood, and walked with a sort of dance. It was all the restless overflowing of a mind evidently too large for his body. His conversation was filled with brilliant flashes; whilst he seemed without exception the most kind-hearted and generous nature we had ever met.

His attention to his sister was charming to witness. She was a small elegant little woman who must have been extremely beautiful once upon a time, but that was long past. She was still charming to look upon, and though she had lost the freshness of youth, she had retained its contour in face and figure.

Her manner of entering a room was very amusing. As soon as she caught sight of us, she made a deep curtsy, advanced a yard and made a second; advanced another yard and made a third—quite a profound obeisance. Then she would sit down with something of the manners of a queen, and addressing her brother, ask him if it was not possible to do something for our interest and amusement.

"Ah! if my brother had only been here with his violin!" she would say; "how his playing would have delighted you!"

But poor Ole Bull, who had gone through the world delighting it with his skill, had also crossed over to the silent land; and his violin

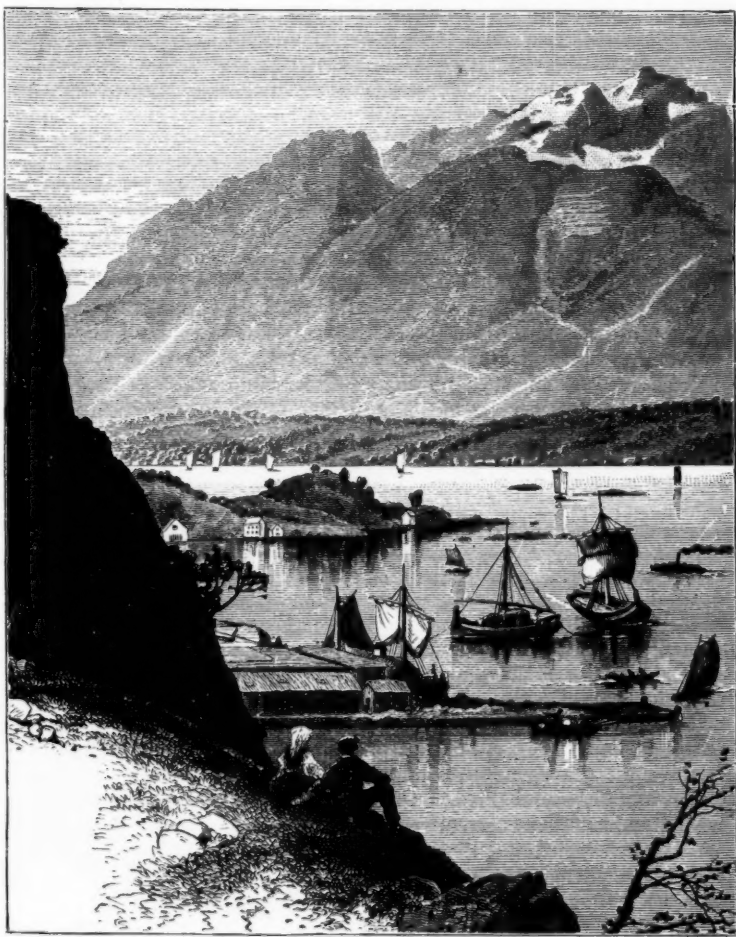


BERGEN

was mute for ever; passing its dumb existence in a museum: and perhaps—who knows?—touched by ghostly hands and giving forth sweet sounds in the witching hour of night. Who knows indeed? What do we know about anything?

We were all journeying to Bergen, but at a given point parted routes, they going one way, we another. But we all agreed to meet again at Bergen.

"You go to Holdt's," said Mr. Bull, "but we patronise the Scan-



INNER HARBOUR, BERGEN

dinavie. It is not a first-class hotel, but very respectable, very quiet, has the best and highest situation in Bergen, and when I wake in the morning and throw open my windows the loveliest view is spread before me. I am one of those who cannot live without the beauties of nature."

So we parted: A. and I beginning a steep ascent which the horses took at the comfortable pace of two miles an hour, whilst they, rounding an immense boulder, passed out of sight.

If there was more rest in the Scandinavie in those days, how much more so is it the case now! Last year (1898) the hotel was a perfect Pandemonium, whilst the commissariat department was shamefully neglected—and the prices were Parisian. On retiring to our rooms, weary with a long day and anxious for repose, we were greeted with the awful tintinnabulum of two bands playing against each other, one belonging to the café of the hotel, the other owned by a neighbouring rival. The result was excruciating, the noise worthy of regions unmentionable excepting by such poetical writers as Dante. At midnight, or a little before, all would cease, but by that time we had gone through two good hours of torture.

This year the management had changed; the commissariat department was improved, the old waiter was less lachrymose on being reminded of happier days, but the bands were, if possible, worse than ever. L., who is musical in the best sense of the word, would look me up every morning before breakfast and declare that the awful torture of the bands crashing at each other was slowly undermining his nervous system. As, however, he looked the picture of vigorous health, and overflowed with quicksilver and high spirits, it seemed evident that the undermining would be a matter of time.

At Holdt's they had kept for us their best rooms, and certainly did their best to make us comfortable. There are many hotels now in Bergen, some of them large and consequential; but they all look cold and uninviting, have none of the luxuries and all the expensive tariff of the most frequented capitals of Europe. We had no courage to make the experiment of a change.

In other ways, Bergen is very much the Bergen of old days; the same old streets, same old customs, same picturesque elements abounding. But whilst things have not improved in quality, prices have risen fifty per cent. in the last few years. In the fishmarket we were asked sixpence as the price of a small cod, and it seemed to me like giving it away. "But," said a Norwegian, "that is thrice as much as they would have charged you ten years ago."

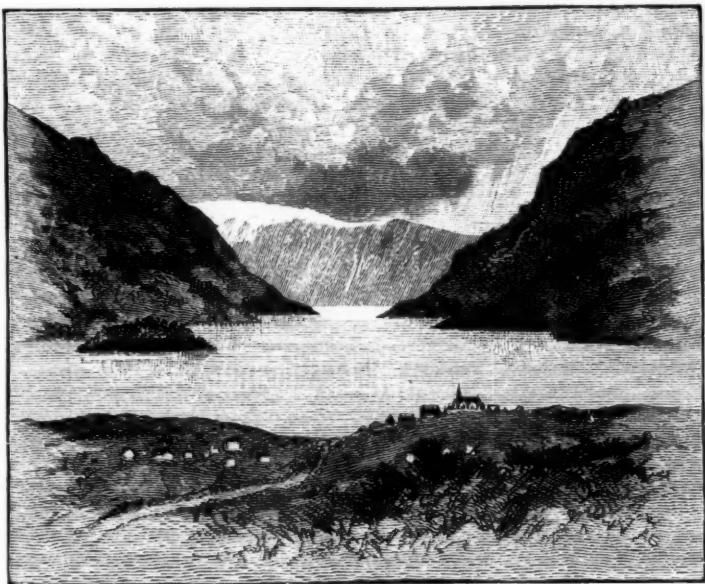
Norway has always been a poor country, and whilst it will probably never be a very rich one, there are everywhere signs and tokens of a fair prosperity; people seem very much at their ease. As far as the hotels are concerned, you get nothing like full value for your money. Parisian prices rule, but not Parisian comfort. It is also certain that they have two prices—one for the English and Americans, another for the Germans and other foreigners. The once unsophisticated Norwegian is becoming wise in his generation. Their manners are abrupt, and not very pleasing.

As soon as we had landed and settled down, we paid Mr. Bennett a visit, in order to ascertain how to make the best use of our time. He

was of the greatest use to us, and when our days in Norway were over we certainly owed him a debt of gratitude.

For the next three or four days, however, we had arranged our own plans : a visit to the Hardanger, steaming up the magnificent fjord as far as Vik, and thence going up to the Vöringfos, one of Norway's three largest falls.

The boat started at eight o'clock the next morning for Vik, and we went with it. As usual the harbour was crowded with shipping of every size and description and from every country. Flags were flying in all directions.



ON THE HARDANGER

Few scenes are more picturesque than this of Bergen harbour, with its length of quays, its enormous area, its magnificent hills in the background, and its general air of having been of Nature's rather than of man's construction. From all this the good ship turned away, and hugging the rocky shore—the iron-bound cliffs of *Gamle Norge*—passed into the matchless waters and beauties of the Hardanger Fjord. How we fared, and the hairbreadth escapes I went through in the next few days, must be the subject of my next letter—an infliction you deliberately brought upon yourself!

BEN PITCHER'S ELLY

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MOONLIGHT," "THE PATTEN EXPERIMENT," ETC.

HAIR as golden as sunlit corn; a skin of roses, red and white; eyes, blue like the May-day sky, bright and clear and sweet. Ben Pitcher's Elly.

So attractive-looking and winning a child is she that some in Dulditch are for keeping her at school after she has passed the fifth standard, and having her trained as pupil-teacher. But there is an annual new baby in Elly's home; the mother wants help; Elly must be sacrificed.

Her education complete, therefore, we come upon her henceforth, a coarse brown apron reaching from neck to heels tied about her short broad figure, her bare arms wet and gleaming, scrubbing with noisy energy the red-tiled floor of the living-room; washing down the bricks outside the cottage door. We meet her, one heavy baby weighing upon her arm, another toddling at her skirts, taking the air in the vicinity of her home.

Ben Pitcher and his eldest boy work on the Brightlands Farm. His cottage stands in a field away from the rest of the village and looks out upon the Brightlands Orchard.

A favourite spot with all the little Pitchers is the orchard, and many a beating does Elly get through her predilection for the place. It holds greater attraction for her and her little charges than the speed-wells, blue as their eyes, the golden cowslips, the white dead-nettle, about which the bees make such a humming, in that favoured locality. The Pitcher family is fond of apple-dumpling, apple-pie, apple raw and apple baked; and it is foolishly credulous of Pitcher himself to believe that all the fruit consumed at his table comes off the one, not too fertile, apple tree in his own back garden!

Yet, now and again, the owners of the orchard complain. Now and again the neighbours tell tales. Now and again the farm-servants, on some blustering autumn day, a linen basket swung between them, their caps awry, their hair blown into their eyes, come laughing and galloping over the meadows to pick up the windfalls in the orchard. And, sad to say, although the apples are nearly fit to gather, although the gale has lasted all night—they find none. On occasions such as these Elly is always beaten.

He is a tall, silent, dark man, hollow of cheek, sharp-featured, Elly's father; and both she and her mother hold him in greater dread than anything in earth or hell or heaven. Both deceive him and play into each other's hands.

Those constantly-recurring babies (there are seven younger than Elly, and there is one boy older than herself) keep the Pitchers' establishment a very poor one. It is something of a problem always to make the ten or eleven shillings stretch from pay-day to pay-day.

Week out, week in, on such tables as that of the Pitchers' family, no meat appears—unless the piece of fat bacon, cut into big lumps and boiled in a hard and heavy dumpling, can be called meat. With the exception of this dainty there is little but bread and cheese and potatoes—and those apples which Elly shakes down from the orchard trees.

It is a nasty implement, that with which Ben Pitcher corrects the failings of his daughter—but it is a handy one—the belt he wears to strap his coarse trousers about his waist. It is a belt that was in the army once, like the grey greatcoat he puts on over his sleeved jacket on Sundays, and it is ornamented with clasps and buckles which raise ugly lumps on Elly's head, and cut her bare arms and shoulders. And Elly is not built in the heroic mould at all; she maddens her father to greater exertions by yelling lustily before her punishment begins. The cottage stands in a lonely spot, and there is no one but the mother to hear Elly's cries—to comfort her when she runs in, bruised, and beside herself with rage and hate and terror, and flings herself, face downward, on the bit of carpet before the fire.

Small wonder that mother and child connive at deceiving this husband and father, at once so passionate and so sullen. In all ways they deceive him. Elly's mother, despite the dragging upon her of the constant babies, is a pretty woman still. She is, wonderful to relate, light-hearted too, and, although her figure is no more, her skin is almost as pink and white as Elly's. Her hair was once like Elly's too, and for all its careless keeping and rough treatment is of a pretty colour still, and breaks into little roughened waves about her forehead as does Elly's own.

When Elly and she, shutting up two or three of the older children in the cottage, and carrying a couple of babies with them, tramp the six miles to Runwich to visit the old father and mother of Mrs. Pitcher living in that town, Elly knows that, three times out of four, she does not catch a glimpse of the aged grandparents. She sits all day long with her mother and the babies in the long kitchen of the King's Head. The outing does not cost Elly's mother a ha'penny. There is no stint of old and new friends, frequenters of the place, to treat the bright-faced woman and the fair-faced child. Sometimes they come home with money in their pockets.

Ben Pitcher knows nothing of all this. Elly keeps the mother's secrets. Later the mother keeps Elly's.

To the Pitchers' cottage there is but one sleeping-room. In this, husband, wife, and eight children sleep together; the littlest in the big bed with father and mother; three of the next-sized with Elly in the rickety iron bedstead pulled across the foot of the larger bed; the boy has, for his separate accommodation, a shakedown against the wall.

This is a shocking state of things of course. Mrs. Robinson at the farm speaks of it to Sir Thomas, her husband's landlord. Sir Thomas is a bachelor, not deriving sufficient money from his estate—nearly all Dulditch belongs to him—to afford a wife. It is a pity—he being a man made for the love of women and children, honourable, tender-hearted, unselfish, gentle. He is rendered miserable by the recital; cannot sleep of nights in his own not too luxuriant apartment in the London Chambers to which “hard times” have banished him. On his estate, impoverished as it is, there must not be such a crying scandal. He resolves to give up his last remaining extravagance, his annual six weeks' fishing in Norway, in order that funds may be supplied for the necessary alterations.

So the order goes forth that on Sir Thomas's estate a second and a third chamber be added to all those cottages at present having only one.

Then in a short time there is excitement in the family of the Pitchers. A constant racket of conversation and exchange of rough compliment go forward between the two bricklayers engaged upon the Pitchers' Cottage and Elly's mother, who is a match for a dozen such. Meanwhile, a youth of seventeen—the “Slab” as he is called—passes his spare moments in flinging stones and lumps of hard mortar at the daughter of the house when she appears; in “chivvying” her round corners when she runs away; in calling out to her epithets no softer than his chosen missiles in return for the chaff to which she treats him.

Very attractive is this horse-play to Elly; and it lasts on and on over several weeks—months even—for the boy's masters are no more expeditious nor constant to the work in hand than the rest of their kind. So friendly do the boy and girl become in their rough, uncouth way, that, when at last the bricklayers' work is done and they go for good, and the painters and glaziers set to work in their places, Elly's spirits are gone too. She shows no inclination, as her mother at once does, to enter upon friendly relations with the quieter and more respectable workmen who for a time hang about the cottage.

“Elly hev finely got on,” the village women say, talking her over, “grown a'most a wummun, th' mawther hev'.”

She is but sixteen, but she looks older, all at once, and carries a quiet and sensible tongue in her head instead of that pert and foolish one with which she used to make herself enemies among her kind.

Presently Elly tires at the wash-tub and faints among the dirty water as she is scrubbing the floor. Then there comes a day when she goes on foot with her mother to a town ten miles distant, where the bricklayers who, besides building another chamber to her home, have made such an epoch in Elly Pitcher's life, are at work.

It was on the evening of their return, Elly sitting listless and weary in the chimney-corner, her head fallen against the wall, that Mrs. Pitcher broached to her husband a scheme for sending the girl to service at last.

"O' coorse! Ha'n't I allust said it? An' oughter ha' gone suner. She be on'y a duin' yer wark hare. Du yer good to be a duin' on it yerself."

"She be a gettin' a right big gal," the mother acquiesces. "She'll be a duin' harsel' good and a larnin' harsel', as I tell her."

She gives a glance of wistful encouragement at Elly, who however begins to cry hopelessly.

"I sholl miss the Baby and my little brawthers," she says, and sobs and snivels so drearily that her father with a warning scowl on his face begins to unbuckle his trouser-strap.

So, in a week or two Elly goes away. A place is found for her in that public-house at Runwich with which she is already familiar. She writes miserable letters home to her "dere father and mother" sending many kisses to the Baby and the "Little brawthers" and complaining—safe away from the strap with the leather buckle—of the hardships of the place, of the tiredness of her legs; of how her hands are chapped and her feet swell; of how the whole work of the house is put on her; of how she longs to be at home again.

"Send me a flower, O Dere father and Mother, ef tis only a Dasy out of the Grarse. I fare so to long to look at Somthin from Dul-ditch" one of the letters concludes.

The poor little "brawthers" miss their sister sadly; for Elly, by no means neglectful of the salutary rod, yet has all the small hearts in her possession. The baby but one grows up quite bandy-legged through having to be put too early upon his feet. There was no one so quick as Elly at seeing birds' nests, so expert at cowslip balls and daisy chains, so successful with the whistles and popguns made from the "hilder" branch. Spring was robbed of half its pleasures for the little Pitchers that year. Mother, too, has grown so "short" with them all; and the children have seen her more than once "making a face," and crying quite openly into the wash-tub; and now and again, as she kneels upon the hearth, splash will come a great tear upon the potatoes she is peeling for supper.

She has the "neuralisy awful in her hid," she tells the father apologetically, and gets small comfort from that quarter.

One summer evening when the sweet dusk had fallen and the scent of the lime-trees was heavy in the air; when the children had been long abed, and the snores of the master of the house could be heard as far as the little garden gate, against which, Mrs. Pitcher, on the lookout for a chance gossip with a passing neighbour, leaned, Elly, poor child, came home.

So fagged and weary was she with the walk, so worn-out and exhausted, that before she could complete her story—broken and disjointed it is true, but in the telling of which not one word, alas! was needed—she had fallen asleep upon the bank on which she had sunk down.

She is put to bed in that second chamber, the building of which had cost her so dear; and the father goes to his work in the morning unawares. For the wife, lying weeping through the hours beside him, dares not tell him that his daughter has come back.

However, in such homes secrets cannot long be kept, and when he returns for his mid-day meal he is confronted by Elly, her blue eyes wide with terror of him, as she sits on the stool in the chimney-corner.

"What air yu back for till yu was guv' lave?" he demands of her, stopping with a suspicious scowl upon the threshold.

"I come becos I had tu, faather," Elly says with a pitiful twitching of the lips—her voice is thick with fear. She dares not turn away her eyes from him to look at her mother, but she stealthily puts out a shaking little red hand and clutches at the skirt of her mother's dress.

"Har misses hav' tret' 'er shameful," the mother explains in nervous haste; and stands in front of Elly dishing up the dinner.

Plunging a fork wildly into the saucepan over the fire, she proceeds to fill a large yellow basin, waiting on the fender in readiness, with the sloppy "light" dumplings (composed of flour, water, and baking powder, simply) which are to form the meal.

But with a by no means gentle movement Ben Pitcher thrusts her on one side, and, with a lowering light in his eyes, confronts his daughter.

"D—n yer!—ha' yu been a bad hussy?" he demands fiercely. "Answer me true—or by God, I'll cut th' life out on yer."

And then Elly, shivering, white-lipped, answers:

"Oh faather—I hev."

At that a wail goes up from the little "brawthers" seated round the table; from the bandy-legged youngest but one, who has been given a hot dumpling into his hands to keep him quiet; from the baby in its cradle, kicking bare, red heels in the air and sucking at its gutta-percha tube. For, without a word, the father has begun to busy himself with the belt that is around his waist.

At the sight, the mother, bold beyond precedent, flung herself upon him:

"Ben—for God's sake!—yer'll du murder, man!—for God's sake!" she cried.

She clung to him, trying to imprison the cruel right arm; but, despite his daily diet of dumpling and potato, the man had strength in that hour of his fury, and savagely flung her off.

Yet, when he reached his victim his arm was mercifully stayed; for the girl, who had not uttered a sound, had fallen sideways against the wall and was lying there, white and senseless, the terrified blue eyes closed.

The father stood and looked at her for a long minute; then with words on his lips crueller than the cruel belt, turned away and sat down to the table.

When a man is in a constant condition of unsatisfied hunger it will not do—if the heavens fall—to neglect a chance of eating. The dumplings, depend on it, were bitter enough that day in Ben Pitcher's mouth; but eat he must in order to be able to place them again to-morrow for self, wife, and children upon the board.

The mother dared not stop in her duties of the table to show any attention to the unconscious Elly. But before the meal was over the girl had revived and was taken with strong shivering, which she strove vainly to repress by hugging herself tightly in her locked arms and pressing against the wall. Her teeth chattered loudly in her mouth. The "little brawthers" regarded her, open-mouthed; and Bandy-legs, leaning, dumpling in fist, against his sister's knee, gave a burst of delighted laughter, evidently thinking it an entertainment arranged for his benefit.

Ben, having concluded his repast, pulled forward over his brow the hat he always wore at the back of his head in the house, and pushing his chair from the table with a grating noise, got up and went to the door. There he paused for a minute, looking out beneath the blue fields of heaven, over the sleepy summer land. Nothing of the peace and the sweetness of the sweet and peaceful spot and hour were in Ben Pitcher's heart. Presently he turned his head back into the cottage room and looked at the girl. She was shaking still with such violence that the rickety chair on which she sat rocked noisily with her.

"Don't le' me find yu hare in home o' mine when I come back ter night—du, I'll kill yer," he said. Said it savagely, but convincingly, too; with the tone of a man who quite possibly might keep his word.

Then he went.

So, on that same afternoon, when the heat of the day was at its height, Elly, loudly sobbing, says good-bye to babies and little "brawthers"; to Mother, giving the baby refreshment at the open door, her face made up like the face of a little child for weeping, after the artless manner of the poor, her tears falling on her bare bosom. Poor Mrs. Pitcher is fagged out with emotion and the day's work; the kitchen has still to be "redd up" and there is the evening meal to see to, and the home-coming of her lord and master to attend. She cannot accompany Elly even half a mile of her weary way. But she looks after the girl's short broad figure, yearningly, as she goes, the mother's eyes all but blinded with the tears she is too much occupied to wipe away.

Across the fields poor Elly journeys to the workhouse.

Her weary feet pat "against the sorrel as she goes," the hem of her pink cotton dress fans away the dandelion-down by the grassy roadway. What a road for such young feet to travel! What a burden of terror and of sorrow for such baby shoulders to bear! For if, in the eyes of the law which permits her father to turn her from his doors at the age of sixteen, Elly is a responsible person,

morally she is but an infant still. No bird, with its "little life of bush and briar," should have been more joyous of spirit and condition than she.

Elly has lived all her life among people who hold the workhouse to be an earthly hell, who loathe and dread its officers, laws, and institutions as we should loathe and dread the devils, the brimstone, and the unquenchable fire—if we believed in them. She has added to the terrors and shames which have been detailed to her imagination shames and terrors of her own. She is, besides, unutterably weary, and sick with painful bodily weakness.

Let us leave the child to perform that drear journey alone. Who cares to imagine the terrors of such a miserable pilgrimage?

When, six weeks later, Elly Pitcher retraced her steps along the same road, she carried in her arms her baby of three weeks old. White and pinched and emaciated she looked, her steps uncertain and wavering from weakness, the light, miserable bundle she carried weighing like lead in her arms.

A few yards she dragged along the weary way, and giddy, trembling, sat down to rest; then, rising with painful effort, dragged a few feet more. After hours of such painful resting, such cruel toiling, she reached the cottage door once more.

The little "brawthers" were still at school at that hour, the mother was standing at the wash-tub. As Elly's figure darkened the door Mrs. Pitcher looked up, and the women gazed into each other's eyes.

Elly does not utter a sound; but the mother, recoiling for a moment, with a cry rushes forward, pulls the child almost violently from the girl's arms and turns away, sobbing wildly, as she rocks the baby on her own breast.

Elly's voice is hollow, all the childish ring of it gone.

"Mother, I cou'n't stop theer. I tried—but I cou'n't" she said. "Yu mus' kape th' baby, mother. I'll wark and pay yer for it. That'll du as yar baby du. Tha's so wake that 'ont take much. Kape it out o' faather's waay—don't let 'm strap it—not yit. Tha's sech a little un—yit."

She had come in and had sat down, and the mother, regarding her with woeful eyes, had placed food before her.

"I b'aint hungry, and I 'ont stop, 'cause o' faather," Elly says, and staggering gets to her feet again.

"Wheer be yu a-goin' i' that plight, gal?" the Mother asks fretful and helpless, and is told that Elly is bound for her old place at the King's Head.

"Misses—she's a hard 'un—but I warked; and she said as how she'd maybe take me on agin when the baby was born—I han't no wheers else to go—and I'm a-goin' theer," Elly concludes.

Before she leaves she comes forward and takes the miserable white-looking atom of humanity she has added to an already overteeming population into her arms and kisses the little pinched face.

"Mother, ha' yer seen—him?" she asks.

Not so much as a "glint" on him, the mother declares, although she has tramped many a mile in search. As a matter of fact the "Slab," scenting trouble ahead, had given up the bricklaying profession for that of arms—had 'listed and was already on his way to India. No help to be expected from that quarter.

Not a word is said to Ben Pitcher on the subject of the new addition to his family. Perhaps he deems it wiser to take no notice and to treat the little workhouse descendant of his line as if it had not existed. Perhaps, in the fulness of his quiver, he has really lost count of the number of arrows allotted to his share. He says nothing.

The offspring of the immature girl-mother does not thrive. Whereas the lawful inhabitants of the cottage, they who, by paternal right, claim their share of bed and board, are round-cheeked, bright and pleasant-looking, the little alien remains ever feeble and flaccid of limb, white and unattractive. It may be that the weight of its young mother's woe and terror was indelibly stamped upon her unborn child; it may be that it feels on its melancholy little spirit the shadow of its birthplace, of its nameless and shameful condition; or it may be (as is more likely) that the requirements of Mrs. Pitcher's own baby restrict the allowances of Mrs. Pitcher's grandchild. Certain it is that the contrast of the two children nourished at one breast is a striking one.

From being ashamed that flesh and blood of hers should be so puny, and diseased and unlovely, "grandmother" grows to feel a positive pride in the child's diminutiveness and feeble condition. The "quality" begin to interest themselves. The "Missus" as she is called in the Pitchers' family, the wife of Mr Robbins at the Brightlands farm, having exhausted her own specifics, insists on driving Mrs. Pitcher and the baby into Runwich to see the doctor there, being privately of opinion that the grandmother—no better than she should be—is starving the child. Her daughters—"the young ladies"—for whom Elly had always found the earliest violets in return for a left-off dress, a ribbon for her hat (they are of Elly's age and older, but are in the school-room still), knit little undershirts and woollen petticoats for Elly's baby because its tiny hands and feet are always cold. Now and then a sympathising person will send a shilling for the benefit of the dwarfed, unwholesome child. A donation which, thanks to the close reasoning of Mrs. Pitcher, arguing that what is for her own support and nourishment is to the advantage of Elly's child, is generally laid out at the White Hart in draught stout.

If it could but die! the tender-hearted women say, looking upon the miserable little atom of humanity. If it would please God to take it! But it does not please Him. By the loss of beautiful, cherished daughters, chief pride and comfort of idolising hearts; by the death of promising healthful sons on whom high hopes are built, whose future stretched all golden before them, heads are bowed, and homes

are desolate. The deformed and sickly workhouse child clings to its small thread of life and pines on.

Presently it is a year old. And while the babe, a few months older, runs, catching at chairs and tables and mother's gown with chubby, clutching fingers, and will make his escape from the brick floor, which is his natural play-ground, to the garden where the marigolds, with whose dew-drenched leaves he loves to play, grow wild beneath the currant bushes, the unhappy alien lies ever on its back upon the top of the chest of drawers where is its bed. Its thin, wearying little voice night and day is hardly hushed. Its face is white and moist and pinched; its little in-drawn lips are blue: it lies always with one shrunken foot and leg twisted the wrong way.

It is not claimed for Mrs. Pitcher that she is a faultless person. On the contrary it is hinted among the neighbours that she has not always been faithful to her husband. It is certain that she tells lies and loves a glass. Yet is she a good-natured and kind-hearted woman. Beyond the neglect of ignorance, and the bad usage consequent on a poverty of resource, her grandchild has little to complain of. Even when the weekly payments cease as, presently, they do; when Elly goes, without a word, from the Red Dragon at Runwich leaving no address, the baby is still kept fairly whole and clean, gets the morsel of bread which, its supply of milk having ceased, is all that it consumes.

It is an evil day in its wretched history when Elly again appears upon the scene.

She comes—a girl of only seventeen still, but with all trace of youth gone from eye and voice. Comes with a brazen face, a hardened glance; with a loose red handkerchief twisted about her neck; with a dirty straw hat, looking as if it had roofed many a villainous head, pulled upon her sunny hair; with a thread of yellow beads about her throat and a large white apron girt about her waist.

She brings some cheap tins and skewers in her hands, and, standing in the open doorway, with a burst of musicless laughter, asks her astonished parent what she will buy. There is a travelling van hung round with door-mats, with saucepans, with common earthenware, upon the open green space before the orchard where Elly used to steal the apples. She steals other things by right of profession now, having joined herself to the villainous-looking middle-aged proprietor of the above itinerant establishment.

He has taken Elly to supply the place of the last woman who called herself his wife. There are half-a-dozen small children who play in the dust of the road, unwashed, unkempt, half-dressed. Another, of which Elly is to be the mother, will soon be added to the stock.

Elly is not afraid of her father now, alas! She stands, arms akimbo, on the steps of her caravan, and watches him as he goes slouching to his evening meal. At a word from his wife he comes to the door of the cottage, looks across to the Green, and is greeted by a burst of

laughter from the girl. With the finger of scorn she points him out to the pock-marked scoundrel with the ear-rings who is her mate. The owner of herself and the caravan acknowledges this species of introduction by a storm of abusive language addressed to Elly herself and her father impartially.

The girl does not care. That poor woman whose successor she is died from ill-treatment; and this Elly knows. But he has not begun to beat her yet.

Ben Pitcher is not a man to be laughed at with impunity. A word to his master "up to the house" brings Mr. Robbins, who hates gipsies as Betsy Trotwood hated donkeys, upon the scene. He did not forget in a hurry the volley of oaths with which the pock-marked gentleman of the ear-rings received his order to depart, nor the string of abusive slang (happily as Dutch to his simple ears) with which Elly, from the vantage-ground of the caravan, greeted that old master to whom she had been used to curtsy, with a nervous recollection of apples misappropriated, from her babyhood up.

Before they started—and they prepared for departure as the darkness of the summer night came on—Elly's mother came weeping across with the grandchild in her arms. Ben had turned it out of doors. The grandmother kisses the poor waif, passionately, with many tears before she leaves it; lies and weeps all night, her own children sleeping around her, for the poor outcast journeying away from her under the stars. But what is the small bundle of whining humanity to Elly?

When, in the first blush of the morning, the caravan comes to anchor again, the owner, having walked at his horses' heads all night, unharnesses the tired beasts, hobbles them for their search over the short, springy turf of the heath for their well-earned breakfast, and goes to fling himself, all dressed as he is, upon his bed. To find yet another occupant of his already overcrowded couch is not a pleasant surprise to him. Elly has to explain the new-comer's presence there as best she can.

She is rewarded by her first experience of the weight of that heavy hand which had beat the life out of the other woman.

The greater part of the long summer's day Elly spends sitting at a distance from the caravan, the babe, whose wailing no instinct or experience teaches her to hush, in her lap.

All about are little hillocks of wild thyme: she crushes the plant with her elbows as she leans back, and the warm still air is sweet with its fragrance. There is not a breath to stir the harebells growing in a big patch beyond her feet. The sky above is as blue as they.

So still she sits, the little rabbits, bright eyed and wary, look out at her from the prickly covert of the gorse-bushes, only half afraid. A sorry sight they see: a disfigured face with bruised cheek and cut and swollen lip; great eyes, that looking out sullenly from under the battered, wicked hat, keep a watch upon the movements of the ear-

ringed man going about the daily business of the caravan without Elly's assistance.

When the shades of evening begin to fall once more, and the baby rabbits, grown bolder, scud across the flowers at her feet, and she sees in the movements about the caravan the well-known signs of an early departure, a despair seizes upon Elly. She is half-dead with faintness, having tasted no food all day; she is distracted by the incessant moaning of the child upon her lap.

She hates that cause of all her woe. Why does it lie there, miserably wringing from side to side its thin blue lips? What binds her to such hideous companionship? What is the child to her?

She had had untiring patience with those dragging babies of her mother's, beneath whose burden her own growth had been stunted; she had loved and wept for the "little brawthers"; but all that girlish tenderness of heart had left her with its innocence. Nothing but hardness was in her breast to-night—that and a desperate anxiety not to be left behind.

The eldest of the vagrant children, brown of face, white-haired, was sent to bring in the hobbled horses. She watched each led across the uneven ground, its reluctance met by kicks and blows of the small tyrant of seven summers who had it in charge. She laid the baby beneath the little hillock of wild thyme, and, breathless, rose to her knees—rose to her feet, trembling with eagerness, sick with fear. Would he go and leave her so?

He had knocked her about cruelly that morning; he had had no thought of the child she was soon to bear to him, but had half-killed her in his stupid, brutal rage; but—would he leave her so?

The sun had set. The western sky was glorious in crimson and gold, the heavens above her head were flushed through their pearly tints by a divine rosiness. The horses' heads were turned to the west. She put her hands above her straining eyes and looked and looked; then called the man's name with hoarse anxiety.

"'Lisha—'Lisha—I'm hare! Don't lave me, 'Lisha."

But there was no strength in the husky voice. In the noise of departure it was drowned. The children tumbled one after the other into the caravan, the man at the leader's head cut the air with his whip; with a strain and a jolt the creaking, cumbrous machine started.

Her hands still shading her eyes, Elly followed, stumbling over the ant-heaps, the hillocks of moss and wild thyme, the prickly gorse catching at the hem of her dress.

An hour later the man, having occasion to stop his horses, becomes aware of the broad, short figure in the white apron and the battered hat trudging behind.

"You hare?" he asks his speech illumined by the interspersal of many oaths. "And where is your — brat?"

"I ha' left it. Yu said as how I worn't to bring it, 'Lisha."

He looked at her, scowling upon her beneath the starlight, and caught her roughly by the arm.

"You ha'n't made a hand on't, d—n you!" he asks suspiciously.

She is almost shrinking from exhaustion, but she looks him straight in the face:

"I ha'n't hurt a hair o' its head, so help me God," she says. "I didn't want it. It worn't nawthin' ter me. A woman tuk it. 'Lisha—I'm a'most starved."

She ends with a sob and he lets her climb up into the caravan. When she has found herself food and a drink of tea from the pot which is always on the stove, she sinks upon the bed and falls into a heavy, dreamless slumber.

When they find the miserable baby its misery has ceased at last. For it is dead upon its bed of wild thyme, its moaning quiet for ever

MARY E. MANN.

THE MAINE

SAIL on, good ship! let light winds bear you on
Through ocean's stormy paths to distant shore,
Ready to meet the battle lost or won,
Ready to help till need shall be no more.
Sail on! sail on! by wings of pity sped,
Freighted with woman's hands and woman's tears;
High hearts to seek the dying and the dead,
Strong love to cast away a woman's fears.
The bannered cross shall float upon the wave
Serene till all the din of war shall cease,
Shall point to victory beyond the grave,
And in its holy silence plead for peace!

C. E. MEETKERKE.

AN OLD COMMONER

THE grave closes, a year passes, and we wonder if the man ever lived. Sometimes the weakness of his vanished character forces the illusion into reality, but sometimes, and happily, he is still strong enough to bring reproaches upon our ready forgetfulness. To-day, with the new life of the hour looking forward to its own summer, the fresh aim glowing, the younger minds, at high pressure, full of hope, there is place and a reason for lingering upon the name of the Old Commoner.

He was a child while the "incalescent scorpion" was still writhing, and the glare of two coronations enlivened the London of his youth. Those were days when there was a light upon Westminster both by land and water which is long ago departed. We do not train our rowing men at the College of Saint Peter in the present years of grace, and some who love the old school would be glad to transport it, despite all sacrifice, to greener playing-fields than those of Vincent Square. Our Old Commoner was hardly one of these, and yet he had an open mind. He had not the fervour which belongs to greatness, but unlike the little, he enjoyed the trouble of looking all round a question and coming to his conclusion weightily. You knew, of course, what to expect, all the time. He had a courtly way of telling you that your notions were foolish. He could draw on half a century of experience, and easily make a young man seem a child. But the best thing of all was to hear his laugh.

Sometimes, in the half-light of a summer evening on the terrace of his home, or, if it were winter, by the fire in his own study, lined with books, he used to tell me of days gone by.

"Life was life, then," he used to say. "You've no conception of how full-blooded it was. I remember my first day in the House of Commons. There was a scene. It couldn't have had much to do with my arrival on the floor of the chamber. I don't think any one knew I was there. My election had not been exciting: I owed it entirely to a lady, a *grande dame* of the old school, whose influence in the North of England was enormous at that time. I came in very quietly, was introduced, was allowed a faint cheer by some of my friends, and ten minutes later was witnessing a scene of wild disorder, which upset my notions of Parliamentary rule for the rest of my life. Perhaps it was just as well, for though this happened before you were born, my boy, I lived to see passions rise higher, and then, as before, of course, there was an Irish element in the business. And the trifle it was all about! Some member had declared that the Protestant Religion was a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. There were

protests. Protests became cries of indignation. Indignation became frenzy, and before the night was over the House fairly shook its sides with rage. It made a tremendous impression on me at the time, and ever since I have wondered why people did not pass off extravagant suggestions with a smile. They do now: and you may hear to-day sentiments expressed in the House of Commons which would have raised a storm two generations ago. We were fuller-blooded then."

The Old Commoner used to shake his head over the degeneracy of the moderns, but he was very proud of being a modern himself. His house was a paradise for men, women, children, and animals. He had an ingenious mind, and all the new devices of the age were brought into requisition to improve his property. One thing used very much to amuse me when he had, as he did at times, a bachelor party staying with him. The cloth used to be removed at dessert, and solemnly a toast was given which proved his loyalty to the Crown he had served so long. Then we suddenly found the dining-table disappear through the floor.

"Take your chairs, gentlemen."

Those who were in the know wheeled them in the right direction, while the rest, rather nervously, followed their example. The result of these manoeuvres was a wide circle round the fireplace. Then, presto! From the floor sprang a long, narrow board spread with dessert and wine. There was no trouble in passing the wine from hand to hand: no rising: a little railway, on which the decanters ran from place to place, acted as dumb waiter. And the Old Commoner's delight in this perfected mechanism was a joy to behold. Certainly I shall never forget the sunny, jovial face as he laughed over it, telling us that he got the idea from an old College Common Room, and had improved upon it. That would lead to any number of Oxford stories.

He remembered the days when wigs had not gone out of fashion, when riding to hounds was a necessary part of academic education, when dinner was at four o'clock. But discipline was discipline. It must have been a very delightful life, but the Old Commoner did not disguise his opinion that younger men had a far better time of it, were treated less like children. One thing he always regretted, he said, the disrepute into which University Sermons, as an institution, had fallen. "As an institution, mind," he said. "The Sermons themselves are as good as ever they were. I heard one a little time ago. But no one is bound to go to them. It was very different in my day. The hearing of long, learned, and majestic sermons was forced upon us, and they became as necessary to us as the air we breathed."

That brought us to great ecclesiastics, of whom he had known a vast number. He knew their weak as well as their strong points. He touched them off with quick spirit. "My Lord of This" was sharply contrasted with "Our Lady of That." He had commendation for

zeal, reprobation for sheer pomposity. Then he would strut down the room to show how a bishop can walk if he likes. It was particularly odd, for he was the very figure for a bishop himself. But in one thing he always declared these prelates are all alike. "They are the most discontented lot on earth. I never knew one that could put up with the house a grateful people permitted him to live in. If it was big, he wanted it small; if it was in the country, forsooth, his lordship would have it sold, transported,—nor gave authority a rest till it was done; and then the whole Bench of them together would ring the changes on the alternatives." And as he told us this, the lugubrious face of the Old Commoner proved that the lot of an Ecclesiastical Commissioner, in the words of the song, "was not a happy one." But he brightened up as he recollected how he had thwarted one of the aproned dignitaries, and sent him back to a house he had declared nothing would induce him to live in, while yet his furniture was on the road to another place.

The Old Commoner had a big purse, and it was lucky that though his physical frame was little, his heart was big also. His table always groaned beneath a great pile of appeals, and I believe that few were sent empty away. His was a charitable soul, partly, I think, because he took, for all his cheerfulness, a very serious view of life. A loss which came to him in middle age told heavily upon him: the greater loss that fell on his house in the days when his hair was wholly silvered killed him outright. The whole nature of the man was sensitive, and though he learnt the lesson of toleration, patience, and forgiveness, with a thoroughness that betrayed itself in every word he spoke, he sometimes gave me the impression that the burden of his days was too great for him to bear. Even so, it was as a sagacious, kindly adviser, a friend to the poor, a valiant and vigorous optimist, that I chiefly remember him. One night a servant brought him news that a man in the village had taken his life. I was sitting with him in his study: we were deep in some literary affairs which it was important to finish. He rose up quickly. The work must wait. Down into the village he went for the purpose of comforting the poor souls thus bereaved. It was late at night. He would go alone. Was that wonderful? I think it was, for this reason only: he was at that time over eighty years of age. I did not see him till next morning. He looked tired, but more, he looked sad. He had seen so much in his time, and here he seemed to be puzzling over the why and wherefore without an answer being vouchsafed from the stores of his knowledge. I asked him nothing. The sadness wore off by degrees, and in a week he was himself again.

The Old Commoner united in his person two faculties which are rarely seen in the same person. He was a sound scholar, and yet a more acute man of business never stepped. He directed a railway, he managed a company for life insurance, he kept the accounts of his own estate, he worked hard at committees on scores of different

subjects for more than forty years, and yet his real joy, as he sat at night by his own fireside, or snatched an hour under his loved cedars (dropping the book on his knee now and again to watch the squirrels chase one another across the lawn), was to read the Latin or Greek verse which those of his generation had learnt to regard as the natural source of human wisdom. In those hours he lost himself; a larger life than ours moved round him,—physically one would think a life more circumscribed, for the world was a little place when those old poets toiled at their work—a greater and a finer and a loftier conception of man's place in the universe held him enchained, than any with which his varied practice of affairs had made him acquainted. The Old Commoner was happy then.

And this makes me think of another trait in the old man's character, more and more developed as he came nearer to the last stage of his long career. This was the spirit of toleration, which even made it possible for him to forgive those who were busy combating his fondest faiths. Perhaps this was nowhere more noticeable than when he spoke of the veteran friend, nearly estranged from him by political action, who possessed also, in even higher degree, those qualities of mind which were so conspicuous in the Old Commoner. The differences disappeared as they came nearer to the line which parts us from that which is unknown, unseen. They met frequently: they had, indeed, done so for years. But just in those last few months they seemed to speak to one another when they met, in tones which voiced a great strength and devotion of feeling. The man who had played the more prominent part went first. The Old Commoner was pall-bearer at the Abbey. I saw him then: his face expressed not sadness, but the calm satisfaction of a noble spirit.

I would not leave the Old Commoner with gloomy thoughts; indeed the last time I saw him he was smiling. There are smiles which have pain in them, but his was not one of these. He knew he had received his death-blow. He was ready to go. His memory did not fail him, even at the last; he spoke of the pleasures of his long life; and hearing what he said, those who watched smiled too, instead of weeping, as he passed into the silence.

THE LOST DERBY

BY EDGAR JEPSON

THOUGH there was no blood-tie between them, Sir Clive and Lady Hardy were so alike as often to be taken for twin brother and sister. Either was grey-eyed, fair-haired, clear-skinned, and of delicate, well-cut features; the chin of either was square; and they were even more alike in their natures, high-spirited, sensitive, very proud, and strong-willed. They had been desperately in love with one another when they married, in love with a real love, founded on an understanding and appreciation of one another's good qualities, not only on the natural attraction of two good-looking, healthy young creatures for one another. It had surely been a love to withstand well the perpetual assaults of close companionship; and now, at the end of a year, it had, to all seeming, gone altogether from Gabrielle's heart. For her part, indeed, she believed it to be dead; she believed that, if she did not actually hate her husband, she at any rate cared nothing for him.

This had not come about in the common, married course; it had been brought about by Mrs. Wilkinson-Bond. A malevolent woman, on the ground of some real or fancied slight, she had fostered a faint sense of injury to a bitter hatred of Clive; had seen that the way to strike him was through his wife; had hastened to grow friends with her; and from that point of vantage had dealt the blow. A man of Clive's good looks and charm had not come to his twenty-eighth year without some love affairs; and he had not lacked the sense to be honest with Gabrielle about them. Mrs. Wilkinson-Bond assured her that one of them—a certain Mrs. Vaughan was the lady—had not even yet come to an end; and brought abundant invented evidence to support the assurance. Gabrielle did not easily, or soon, believe her; but the evidence was overwhelming; Clive too showed himself a little less absorbed in her than he had been; she was at last convinced; and her world crumbled away beneath her feet.

Her fine, if foolish, pride sustained her to endure the torment of her grief and jealousy and pain; but also it prevented her from going to her husband for the truth of the matter. Of a sudden he found himself a man who, thinking to touch warm flesh, touches a corpse. At first he could not believe his senses; but he was very soon assured that an infrangible barrier was set between his wife and himself. After a few vain attempts to break it down, his pride, as great and at least as senseless as hers, fired to an equal flame. He knew that he had done no wrong; he thought that she had fallen out of love with him;

he would not protest or complain. With the stoicism of their good breeding, the two poor fools began to eat their hearts out, in a proud, ludicrous silence; pain was brushing very gently the bloom off her beauty, and dimming the glow of his health. Their friends saw no change in them: they still laughed when it was needful: but either saw the other growing thinner, and wondered at it. Clive sought relief in his racing, Gabrielle in the diversions of society; they avoided one another as much as might be, for to be together quickened the perpetual, dull aching of their hearts to a livelier pain.

At this juncture George Vane fell in love with Gabrielle. A man about Town, he had all the qualities proper to that avocation: his looks, manners, and assurance recommended him to the women; his cheerfulness, his skill in riding and shooting, to the men. His means were small, his debts great; and he had acquired that entire selfishness natural in a man who has always lived by exploiting the weaknesses of his fellows. Gabrielle's fortune touched his heart no less than her beauty; and he had no thought of letting his long friendship with Clive stand in his way.

He was not long letting her see his passion; and after her first vexation at it had passed, she came to regard it with a certain tolerance. From tolerance she passed to pity for him, pity that he should be in so hopeless a case. This pity was something his ally; but he had on his side stronger feelings, a young girl's craving to be loved, the desire to have stanchd the bleeding of her pride, to be restored to her content with herself by another man's loving her, the desire for vengeance on her treacherous husband. She was little by little disarmed against the assault of his passion; and with his fine hunter's instinct Vane understood that it was so; he began to creep into her confidence, to set himself to grow part of her life. Without dreaming of it, she was falling more and more under his influence.

That spring Clive was enjoying great good-fortune on the turf; and Vane was sharing it. Race after race fell to his horses; and Vane backed them all. Then Royal Red won the Guineas. The sporting papers, one and all, declared it a fluke; and declared further that the horse could not stay the Derby course. Clive knew better, and told Vane. Vane lost no time; before Clive could back the horse himself, he put all his winnings, and every other penny he could raise by selling out all his investments, on it; and brought down its price to two to one. Clive complained somewhat bitterly that some one had got wind of the horse's true form, and spoiled the market. Vane condoled with him with manifest sincerity, and proclaimed himself an equal sufferer.

It had been the ambition of Clive's life to win the Derby; but now that the realisation of it was assured to him, he had little joy of it: Fortune, as is her frequent custom, was giving with one hand, and taking away with the other. He never said it to himself in so many words; but he was dimly aware that he would have promised cheerfully never to set eyes on a race, or a horse again, to secure that

Gabrielle should once more, if only for five minutes, be her old loving self to him; in truth, he would have given his eyesight for it. Day after day he went down to his racing-stables moodily, watched Royal Red at his gallops moodily, and came back to his home, so empty to him, moodily. Vane's cheerful good-fellowship could alone draw him, at times, from his moodiness; more often it drove him to the verge of a raging fury, and he hid from it.

Some ten days before the race he and Gabrielle went down, at the week end, to one of his country houses; and Vane and four or five friends went with them. On the Sunday afternoon, Clive was lying on a long chair in the garden under the windows of the house. His gloom was heavy on him; and he lay very still, his half-closed eyes seeing nothing. Of a sudden Vane's voice came through the open windows of the morning-room above his head. He was speaking low; but there was the thrill of passion in his tone, and the words came penetrating.

"I kept silence till now, though I think you knew," he said. "I was a poor man, and you are rich. But when Royal Red wins the Derby, I shall be rich. That very night we will be off to Paris; and I swear, Gabrielle, you shall never regret it."

"No: no: I will not!" cried Gabrielle; her voice came very faint; and Clive thought he recognised the 'no' that means 'yes': he had heard it himself.

"Ah, you are not sure of me. You are not sure that you care for me! But I am sure; and I will not take your 'no.' In spite of yourself I will make you happy!" cried Vane; and his words came quicker and louder.

Clive slipped out of his chair, and moved quietly away; the thoughts were running through his mind with an extraordinary swiftness and clearness. Then of a sudden he turned dazed; and was presently stumbling like a drunken man down the aisles of the home wood. At last he threw himself down under a tree; and his heart ached and bled, and bled and ached again. It was long before he could tear his thoughts from Gabrielle's faithlessness to Vane's treachery. Then he fell into a very cold rage; and scheme after scheme of vengeance formed in his mind. But the sun was already low in the sky when his natural cool shrewdness returned to him, and he saw his way. He was a little surprised to find no anger in his heart against Gabrielle, only an overmastering desire to save her from Vane. If she no longer loved him—and plainly she did not—she should not fall into the hands of such a scoundrel; and he saw for the first time with clear eyes the selfish, treacherous, worthless nature of his friend. He would save her, and ruin him by the same stroke.

He came back to the house with a new light in his eyes, his gloom gone, and something of his old cheerfulness on him. The shock and the having something to do that would take all his doing, braced him. For months he had avoided Gabrielle; now he neither avoided

nor sought her. But when they were thrown together, he was full of a hundred casual cares for her, the cares that had been so natural when they loved one another; and times and again Vane found himself forestalled. This change in Clive did not make the struggle in Gabrielle's heart any the easier for her. Vane's influence over her was strong; weakened by long trouble she had fallen thoroughly under it. The need to escape from a life in which the frequent presence of her husband ever set her wounds rankling afresh, the need to find ease in a new life, was heavy on her. The desire for vengeance was still strong. But, urged on as she was by all these, she was held back by an obscure feeling underlying them all which, fierily as she denied to herself its very existence, was very like love for her husband. She was utterly at a loss about her real wishes; she did not know what she would do; and it was likely that Vane's masterfulness would turn the scale.

When Clive came to weigh the cost of saving her, he winced. He had always run his horses straight; and he found his duty to his wife and his duty to the British Public opposed. Could he, as an honourable man, let his wife fall into the hands of a scoundrel? Could he, as an honourable man, let the British Public lose the money it had laid on his horse? The fact that he would lose heavily himself did not seem to him to lessen at all the evil. But he was too clear-headed, too little of a sentimentalist, to prefer the farther duty to the nearer; only he sighed as he said to himself, "Well, that dear old ass the British Public must be sold again." He never thought of the sacrifice of his ambition; he was sadly aware that he must sacrifice things dearer to him than winning the Derby, if he would straighten out the tangle of Gabrielle's life.

A day or two before the race a fresh access of jealousy settled Gabrielle for a few hours in the purpose of flying with Vane: they dined out; and Clive took Mrs. Vaughan into dinner. His attitude to that lady gave Gabrielle no reason for her jealousy indeed; but when did jealousy want a reason? In the garden after dinner, she gave Vane her promise that if Royal Red won the Derby, she would fly with him. On the next morning, she did not yet know what she wanted; but she wished heartily that she had not pledged herself.

Clive's bad quarter of an hour came, when he had to explain to his jockey, Jem Hind, that Royal Red must not win on the morrow. The little man sat, very uncomfortably upright on the edge of a long saddle-back chair in Clive's smoking-room; and when Clive broke the news to him, he jumped to his feet and tweaked at his hair, muttering, "I'm blessed if I ain't asleep!"

"I wish you were," said Clive. "But you're not; and Royal Red's got to lose."

"I never would a' believed it! Never!" cried the little man, in an extraordinary distress, and he broke into protestations, entreaties, and appeals. "You that have always run your 'osses straight, sir! Can't

you make enough that way? 'Ave you dropped so much, as you *must* run on the cross?"

"No, no!" cried Clive sharply. "It's not money, Jem! I stand to lose fifteen thousand, besides paying your losses whatever they are! It's—it's—a matter of honour."

The little man scratched his head, and rumbled his hair: "It beats me, Master Clive! Honour! That beats me! But if you says it—well, man and boy, I've always known you square."

"It is—a matter—of honour," said Clive very slowly. "I've tried to find another way. There is none. Can you do it?"

"Well," said the little man sorrowfully, "if I can win with a 'oss, I can lose with a 'oss. But 'e's a good 'oss; one of the best. And it's 'ard, crool 'ard on 'im that he shouldn't win the triple event!"

"It's hard on him; it's hard on you; and it's hard on me. I don't suppose I shall ever win the Derby now; and you know how I've wanted to. The cards and the horses never forgive," said Clive sadly.

"There's no saying—no saying. But if it's got to be, it's got to," said the little man rising to go.

"Let me know what you stood to win," said Clive as he opened the door.

"You'd 'a asked what I stood to win first, Master Clive, if you hadn't been on the square. But it's a rum go—a rum go." And the little man went out shaking his bewildered head.

A fortunate shower in the early morning made the drive down to Epsom pleasant; but three of the party added little to its gaiety. Clive was absorbed in his driving; Gabrielle sat silent and unsmiling; Vane was irritable; playing for such heavy stakes, the bad strain in him came out. He could scarcely drag his mind from the thought of the money to press Gabrielle's foot now and again; and that should have been easy enough, for her beauty ravished the eye, and her troubled air deepened her charm. A thousand troubled thoughts thronged through her mind: she tried to see herself parted from Clive for good and all; she tried to see Clive enduring the just punishment of her loss. Then she fell to a heart-rending recalling of the drive down to the race the year before, when she had sat by Clive's side—to recalling the love in his voice and eyes. When they reached the course she was no nearer knowing the real desire of her heart than she had been when Vane proposed flight to her; but she would have given anything not to have given her promise.

She lunched in a dream; she walked the Paddock in a dream; only Vane's "He must win! He must win!" awakened her for a moment.

When the bell rang that told them that the horses had started, she stood on the box-seat, her glasses glued to her eyes, trembling violently; Vane in an equal trouble stood beside her; and Clive watched the colour ebbing out of their faces, a faint, cruel smile on his own. It seemed to Gabrielle that her heart would burst her bosom; she could

scarcely breathe; she could not see through the glasses; she could not take them away from her eyes. The horses came round Tattenham corner; and Vane muttered "Royal Red leads!"

Half-way down the straight, the crowd began to yell, "The favourite wins! The favourite wins!" And at the cry she knew at last what she wished; that, now that it was too late, she would rather live, miserable and unloved, by Clive's side, than enjoy away from him the fondest devotion of the best man in the world. She had scarcely learned it when the horses were upon them, and the crowd hushed. In the supreme excitement her sight cleared; she saw Royal Red neck and neck with another horse; saw him lose ground, and pass the post half a length behind. She could not believe her eyes; but Vane's stunned mutter, "He's beat! He's beat!" reassured her. She cried faintly "Thank God!" dashed her glasses on to the roof of the coach; and stumbled down from the seat, blinded by tears of relief.

Clive caught her arm; said, "You're upset; you must get out of this heat at once!" helped her down from the coach; hurried her through the crowd; and brought her to a tandem awaiting him on its outskirts.

She hardly knew what she was doing, or where she was, till she found herself, clear of course and crowd and carriages, bowling along a side road leading out into the country. There were no grooms with them; Clive seemed to be giving all his mind to the driving. She dried her eyes, and lay back, only conscious of an immense relief.

Presently, Clive glanced at her, saw that she had recovered, and began to speak in a hard, bitter voice: "Of course you're glad that I lost the Derby; but I don't think you need have offered public thanksgiving for it. I don't mind your injuring me in other people's estimation; but I do mind your injuring yourself."

"I wasn't! I didn't! You're quite wrong!" said Gabrielle weakly.

"Well, perhaps no harm was done. Very likely your tears put them off the scent. They couldn't know you were crying because you'd lost the chance of enjoying the brief affection of that scoundrel George Vane."

Gabrielle stared straight before her, her face very white.

He did not look at her, but went on in a gentler voice: "Now I don't want to go on spoiling your life. You've stopped caring for me—I've given up trying to guess why—and I'm going to clear out of your way. I'm not going to cut my throat, because I think there's just a chance that, if I don't see you for a year or two, I may stop caring for you. I'm merely going to disappear. I've worked it all out, there's going to be a yachting accident; and I shall be believed to have been drowned. I shall get away to Africa, and leave the field clear for you to marry some decent fellow of whom you can keep fond—if you can keep fond of any one. I should have thought—I should have thought—I treated you well enough."

"I don't understand—I don't understand—What are you going away for? Why? Why?" said Gabrielle thickly.

"Partly to give you a free hand; partly because I can't stand seeing you when you don't care for me any more."

She looked up at him, and saw the face of a desperately unhappy man: he had won his battle; he had saved her from a miserable fate; and the reaction from the fighting had left him weak, and careless of wearing any longer his mask. His eyes, turned away from her, were looking wearily over the sunlit fields. Of a sudden she burst into a storm of sobs, and cried, "You shan't go! You shan't go! I'd rather be miserable with you than have no life at all away from you! But I can't understand—I can't understand—You would do this for me—and yet—and yet—you make love to Mrs. Vaughan."

"What!" shouted Clive. "How dare you? Who told you that lie?"

"Didn't you—didn't you kiss her in the Selwyns' conservatory? Didn't you wander about the moors with her day after day, when I was at my mother's, and you were in Scotland?" said Gabrielle hoarsely, her wild eyes striving to pierce into his very soul.

"No; I didn't! So that's the kind of lie that hound told you! I've been true to you, child, in deed, in word, in thought, all the time." And his voice rang absolutely true.

"Good heavens!" said Gabrielle, and buried her face in her hands.

They were silent awhile; then he said in a broken, very weary voice, "I don't understand any more than you. I'm tired of it all, dead tired. I can't stand any more. I leave it to you. Here, take the reins."

She took them, not daring to look at him. He seemed to swallow something, and went on, "The road we're on will bring us back to town; the first turning to the right will bring us to the Grange in a couple of hours. If you accept my offer of clearing out, keep straight on. If you think you can love me again—turn—turn—to the right. But, for God's sake, be sure!" He ended almost fiercely; dropped heavily back in his seat; and closed his eyes.

Gabrielle took the corner clumsily; he opened his eyes to the jerk; put his arm round her; and kissed her full on the lips.

"Oh," she said with a little sob, "what a fool I've been! What a wicked, wicked fool! You'll never forgive me—never. And—and—I can't see the horses' heads."

JOYCE ARUNDELL

THE girl who descended from the train, with a few soft words addressed to those still continuing their journey, and with a sign of recognition to Old John, was something more than a child. The clothes she wore were fashionable. Her face was one that would soon develop strong motives and characteristics; it was full of expression; the eyes might easily light up with waywardness.

Old John, as he helped her to take her place in the lighter vehicle which he had brought to meet the train, spoke to her with a bluff readiness which betokened that he, at least, had never learned the mincing manners of pampered menials.

"Miss Joyce," he said sternly, "you should ha' come before. Your father's hard on death. Girls in these days aren't dutiful. He is for ever saying so. You should ha' come before. He won't think any better of you for your fine clo'es. An' you won't think so much of yourself when you find him stretched out grim and dreadful. You should ha' come before, Miss Joyce."

"What! You do not mean to tell me that he is actually——"

"Not yet. No, not yet. But it is a high wind, and sure as fate he will go out on it."

The mysterious assurance of these last words seemed to touch the girl to the quick, and she held her breath painfully until the lights of the home-courtyard shone out through the gloom, giving her welcome.

It was a welcome that froze when she entered the house itself. A great, sombre house, hung forbiddingly with dark tapestries. The decorations of the wide hall were hostile to comfort, and also, one would have thought, to health. But Joyce Arundell was grateful to be here at last—it was home.

Across the hall came a not ungracious figure.

They exchanged kisses.

"My father . . . ?"

"Lives."

"I am glad, I am glad! I can go to him?"

"In four or five minutes." The elder Miss Arundell beckoned the girl to the big settle, which afforded a snug shelter from the waste beyond it, and warmth to limbs that were numb and chilled. "Sit there, my child. Your relatives in London, I trust, are well? They have not communicated with your father since last you were here; but we trust that they are in good health. Tell me how your Aunt Catherine arranged for you to take this long journey in safety, as she was bound in duty to do?"

"She herself came with me as far as Exeter."

"And since then?"

"I was escorted by her cousin."

A tremulous inquiry hovered over the austere countenance, but was not shaped by the lips.

"Your father's life draws to its close," she said, as one in a reverie. She was shading her eyes with her hand. "You know, Joyce, that you will be mistress here very soon? I trust that you have reflected upon the difficulties that lie before you? Your duty is likely to be very hard and tiresome."

"Again," thought Joyce, "though I have been in the house scarcely five minutes, again that word *duty*! If duty goes gloomily housed like this, the less we see of it the better!" And she thought of Aunt Catherine's beautiful house in London. Then she checked herself, thinking of her father, and said aloud, "I am a woman now, Aunt Elizabeth."

The other looked with critical gaze upon her. "You are a woman, Joyce, in years, I know, for you are some months past your twenty-first birthday; but womanhood is not simply a matter of years, it is a matter of experience."

Miss Arundell might have added more in this strain, which was a favourite one with her, but just then, through the corridors above, a loud note sounded, the warning of a deep bell that struck on Joyce's ears as though it were her father's death-knell.

"That is for you, Joyce."

"Am I to go up to him—alone?"

"Alone. Not only that he wishes it, but also it is better thus. My farewell has already been spoken." And saying this, she kissed her niece, who had already risen. There was something very solemn, very much in keeping with the occasion in this dismissal; something that kept the girl from quaking as she ascended the broad staircase. She felt that a certain dignity and presence of mind was required of her.

Outside her father's room she waited a moment, then softly entered. As she anticipated, he was not quite alone, but the gaunt figure of a man who watched beside the bed rose upon seeing her. "Miss Joyce!" he said, and then putting his finger on his lips, stole from the room. There was no further word of explanation.

This was a room well in keeping with the rest of the house. It was hung with tapestry of remarkable texture and beauty, whereon beautiful nymphs disported themselves in marvellous woods and waters. That it was the chamber of a man of wealth and taste would not have struck you; it looked more like the dwelling-place of an eccentric. The bedstead itself was a vast erection, like a citadel for defence, strongly made, with high posts, and dragons carved in wood at the foot. The occupant was hemmed in by heavy curtains, and all the atmosphere was one of gloom. It was difficult to discern at first, in the half-light, a wizened, weary face reclining upon the pillows at the back of the structure—even for Joyce, who knew what to expect.

But no sooner had the girl approached the bed than he lifted himself with a surprising strength. He even brushed from his temples the disordered white hair, and a gleam of recognition shot from his eyes. His voice was very clear and very strong.

"My daughter Joyce!"

"Father!"

"Yes," he said with a strange smile. "I see now that it is you. At first I thought it was Death with his scythe, entering by that door in the dark. Let me look at you, Joyce; it will banish my fancies. Time is short: they seem to forget that while they torture me."

"Yes, father," the girl whispered, bending over him. "You can see me now and touch me." His cold thin fingers were passed over her brow. He looked up into her face, then with his hand sought her own. She trembled at the impact.

"Joyce, child, you have been long in coming. Tell me, did they make an effort to keep you from me, there in London? Tell me the truth."

"They let me come, nay, they made me come, as soon as ever the message was delivered.

He hardly heard aright. "For if they did so desire to prevent you, out of sheer pity they must have let you come. All this time I have been struggling but to live till I should see you here, and all these hours the Fates or the Furies, I know not which, have been dragging me down."

The words were quaint enough, but Joyce found them comforting: her father had ever been happiest when playing the part of scholar, hermit, or recluse, and in either character she no longer feared him. Phraseology of this kind intimated that the man was at his best and mildest,—it was incompatible with a bitter leave-taking.

"I am glad you are come, Joyce," the dying man continued, "because I have no wish to become a byword in the realms of memory, a byword and a mockery in the land where nothing is forgotten. From that fate it rests with you to deliver me. Sit down, my girl. There at the edge, and turn your face full to me."

Up to this point his tone had been firm; now breath began to fail him, and he spoke in gasps.

"You are like your mother. It is of your mother I want to speak. How beautiful she was!"

The girl's eyes filled with tears, she was recalling a thousand meaning reticences, not only on her father's part. There was a gallery of dead and gone Arundells in the house, but the beautiful mother was not among them.

"Yes, very beautiful. Banefully beautiful! Your mother's name was Christabel, a name well fitted to her person and her loveliness. Let me look at you again, Joyce. Yes, you are wonderfully like her. Yet I will trust you, and when I am gone, you will remember what such a trust demands."

The girl's frame was shaken with sobs. He pressed her hand restrainingly.

"Your mother bore me no son, child; and that turns me faint now, as I think of it. Oh yes, my brain is quite clear, and in my soul I feel younger than ever! We had a happy life, but it was very short. When I grew immersed in my books, she saw no reason to forego her gaieties. Froyle was a cheerful place in those days. Why, then, did your mother run away from me? Did I check the flow of her full life? Never; but she went, and then you grew up alone in this gloomy house, till that masterful woman your mother's sister came and took you away."

Joyce nerved herself to hear more, and more was forthcoming.

"When your mother," the feeble voice went on, and his words seemed to issue from parched lips, "when your mother forsook me for a man who was to become famous, her life was bound to become a life of shame. He still looks after our destinies, I am told, but if you ever see or hear of him in that gay world of yours, shun him like the poison. He threw your mother aside long ago. That, do not believe, child, is the way of the world, it is only the way of Sir John Delafield: he bears it out with nations as with individuals, and God will reward him!"

"And now I have a promise to extract from you. I have prepared everything for your future. In that future you must undo all that has gone before. Father failed, mother failed, but you must succeed. Will you promise me?"

For a moment Joyce was silent. Then she whispered in an awestruck way, "What am I to promise?"

Dropping her hand, he clutched the counterpane tightly. His strength was fast failing. Every syllable came distinctly still, but with pronounced and exhausting effort.

"Christabel," he began, "no; that was your mother, you are Joyce. But it is Christabel should have reigned. She should have reigned, not only here, but in that larger, brighter world. That you must not heed, Joyce; you have the image of her beauty, the reflection of it, in you; cultivate it, for beauty is a great gift. Then fortune. Christabel was never mistress as you will be mistress. You start life with great riches. Use them, child, use them for glory and for conquest; that is my legacy to you. You understand me?"

"I try to follow, father; but you speak so strangely."

"Not so," he answered. "Besides, it is all written down for you. I only want to hear your promise, and then to pass away in peace. I want you to promise this, that you will fill her place as she herself filled it. Oh that you may live to be revenged on the cruel spinners of our two lives! I sometimes see you, my daughter, playing that great part in the world which should have been hers! here at Froyle, dear Froyle, to which she came those years ago, a hopeful bride—here a worshipped, revered figure, the Lady Bountiful of all the country round. But she lies in a nameless grave. Make my grave nameless

too, Joyce! Then far beyond this petty circle, she ought to have shone as well. Perhaps it was my fault that she rushed blindly into the stream, only to find it a whirlpool. Could she not have foreseen it? He cared no more for her reputation than for the reputations of others. You can undo it, Joyce. You can punish him. You can make him lie in the dust for what he did. Make that your aim, your duty. Promise me."

She felt for his hand and clasped it. It was cold.

"It is a promise?"

"Yes," she answered.

"There is ample wealth at your disposal. But you will not forget Froyle? You are the last Arundell, and only a woman, but you may live a long life yet, and though you marry, they will not forget that you spring from the old stock. But whatever comes to you in the great world, do not forget what I have told you. Punish him, punish Sir John Delafield! When you have done that, you will be glad perhaps to return here, and lay your bones with mine."

After this, a gradual impotence came over him. He spoke several times, but with the fulfilment of his declaration, and the hearing of his daughter's promise, that sudden access of strength seemed to receive a check. Now and again he murmured the name "Christabel, Christabel!" then sank back into deeper silence.

Joyce, following her own train of thought with new vivacity and active inward questioning, felt his hand grow feeble by degrees. She allowed it to fall from hers, and then crept quickly to the further wall. She rang the bell by which she had herself been summoned. He woke into a second's consciousness at the sound. "*Joyce has promised me*," he said, as though addressing a third person. "*It will all be well henceforward.*" The girl was back at the bedside in an instant. His eyes were closed. Nor did he open them again.

For many long days that farewell scene was vividly present to the mind of Joyce Arundell. Her father's words had given direction and impetus to her thoughts, to her intentions; with a burning desire she called to mind the promise she had given. Indeed, she was always thinking of it. The demand, like the provision, was one utterly unexpected. She had learnt to love the gay world which had been opened to her during her sojourn in her aunt's house; but carefully enough they had warned her to look for nothing more than a pittance from that man of mystery, her father.

All this, and with it her own outlook on life, was now changed. Her own mistress, she was also the mistress of others. Froyle itself bowed down before her with the obeisance, not of mean servility, but of studied affection.

As for her relatives, whether it were the severe Aunt Elizabeth, who still held a nominal sway in the house itself, and a decisive tutelage over her self-willed young charge—this was her way of looking at it—

or those others in London, with their lively way of regarding the world, and their continual strictures upon her proposal to remain at Froyle for several years; Joyce felt herself surrounded by them as though by enemies.

But the months glided away smoothly enough to all outward appearance. The grey atmosphere of the moorland drew to itself new charms with every day. In sober tranquillity the older woman dreamt her dreams of the past; in a world as reposeful, and perhaps a little more sombre to her youthful spirit, Joyce laid her plans for the future.

Old Mr. Arundell had been laid to rest some three years, when the first sign of his daughter's determination to fulfil what he had outlined as her destiny was made manifest. It came in a manner, owing to the force of circumstances, little indicative to Joyce of any personal change.

One day Miss Arundell startled her niece by making an announcement.

"Joyce," she said, "we have now been inmates together of this house for a space of three years. To say that in all that time there have been no failings in our conduct one towards another, seeing that of dust we are made and to dust must return, and that our best efforts of conduct are liable to the errors of thoughtlessness—seeing this, I say, and reckoning up the passage of that considerable flight of time—to say that all our dealings one with another had been beyond reproach, would be greatly to presume, and dishonestly to ignore the facts. But I have learnt in your society much that I trust I may always remember to my profit; and you, as I believe I may assert with truth, have not failed to glean something of value from the habits of one who has made decorum and fitting conduct her lifelong study. That I hope I may assume, Joyce, before going further in what I have to lay before you?"

"Certainly, my dear aunt," faltered Joyce, a little nervously. "I think we have got on very well together."

"That is just the kind of answer I might have expected from you, Joyce, even though you couch your expressions a trifle abruptly. Let me inform you in as few words as possible of my intentions. It may be within your knowledge that many years since I was the object of a romantic attachment. I do not pretend that I had then, or still less that I have now, any gifts or traits of character which should render me particularly liable to impress in a favourable sense the sterner sex, but the fact remains that one whose career and profession alike represent the tendencies of an age more chivalrous than our own, did me the honour to ask my hand in marriage. His suit, and more than that, his whole manner of life was little acceptable to my honoured father, who had small respect, and smaller love, for the adventurous. Like his son, your own late father, he relished the solemnities of existence; they were more to his taste than the excitements and the glamour which belong to arms. It was for him to command, me to obey. I renounced all thought of Captain Devereux. Soon after-

wards he took to himself a wife, a proceeding which I have never resented. Her recent death—though I need hardly call that recent which happened some six years ago—has placed him in a position for which any one would regard him or his like with sympathy, but with something more than sympathy in my regard, who have heard so often the declaration of his devotion to myself. Do not suppose, Joyce, that I cherish any allusions with respect to my own capacity for enjoyment, or for filling with joy the lives of others; but the young lives which are his care may not be the worse if to that is added the succour of a woman; nor can I suppose that a somewhat disorganised establishment can be other than more elegant when a person of experience and discretion regulates its management."

The periods of Miss Arundell here came to an end. She put a question to Joyce with her eyes.

"Then you are going to be married, Aunt Elizabeth? What more can I say, or indeed what less, than that I wish you happiness with all my heart?"

"Your thanks, Joyce, are for this reason acceptable: that I believe them to be sincere. But beyond what I have said, there is something more that I must tell you. Captain Devereux proposes to favour us with his company, if that is agreeable to you, during to-morrow. I have given him to understand that his presence will not be distasteful to you, if only for my sake, and that if he will honour us with his company at the dinner-table to-morrow, we shall receive him fittingly. It happens that he has received a command which brings him in our direction, and this will take him almost past these very doors in the natural course of things, so that to pay his respects would be only natural in any circumstances. I should add, that he will not come alone."

Joyce was all attention, but she did not betray any particularly ardent curiosity.

"He will bring a friend? Who may it be?"

"That is a matter upon which at the present time I am as ignorant as yourself."

True to the appointed hour on the following day came Captain Devereux. He asked leave to present to the two ladies, his friend, Hugh Carden."

The two men were contrasts in every respect. Captain Devereux bore traces of the arduous life which had been his in all parts of the world; his face was rough and grizzled, his person bulky, his voice thick, his speech awkward. His friend cut a very different figure. To Joyce he recalled in an instant the brilliant gaiety of many a London scene. His manner was open; his voice was resonant. They were soon on friendly terms, for he spoke of her relatives, whom he told her he had lately seen. "But I wonder," he said, "that you think so little yourself of the delights of mingling with those who are in touch with the real forces of life. This is stagnation."

"Ah, no," said Joyce, "you little imagine how much there is to be

done at Froyle! especially so far as I am concerned, for my responsibility is considerable. But there, why should I talk of it? Some day I shall resume the part I had just begun to play under my Aunt Catherine's roof. There is plenty of time."

"Only do not leave it till too late. There are others, Miss Arundell. Some whom I know are never tired of singing your praise; but it is well known that they wait for a certain star to rise again in their own part of the firmament. That star is yourself. When it does reappear, we shall see if it shines only for them!"

The voices of Captain Devereux and the other lady broke in upon their conversation.

Joyce was obliged to turn her civilities to the older man; but all the while the words of Hugh Carden rang in her ears to the refrain of a deep reminder of what her father had said in his dying instructions.

That very day a new complexion was given to her thoughts by a hint thrown out by her aunt. It was clear that soon there must be a wedding. How would Joyce fare thereafter? The Devereux mansion was far away among the dales of Cumberland. Much might be said both for and against the plan that suggested itself. Captain Devereux might be called away from home for months, perhaps years, at a time; the house was large, Joyce must not live alone, even at Froyle, and for all reasons would be welcome.

But Joyce declined. She wrapped up her refusal in the softest tissue of excuses. Captain Devereux and her aunt took the decision stoically, whereupon she came to another without delay.

The two friends departed that evening.

It was whispered at Froyle that some one had made an impression on Miss Joyce's heart. But what did the gossips know?

Within a month a more decided gloom settled upon the old house. Froyle slept. London is ever awake, and it was to London that Joyce went. Indeed, she was due there, if her father's behest was to be obeyed.

II

IT was clear to all the world that Joyce Arundell was in love with Hugh Carden, and yet she seemed in no haste to marry him. Her uncle's house had been her home for some years: a widower now, he was glad of a woman with a presence and a manner of her own, to do the honours. Those honours were of the elaborate kind, and a day seldom passed without some function taking place in which Joyce bore her part.

Hugh Carden was like a son of the house, and always welcome. His was a rising name in the political world. Some people thought that Joyce was fond of politics, and every one knew that she was a woman of brains. They did not dream, however, of her real attitude towards Hugh Carden, who had interested her far more since she had seen him

accidentally in the company of Sir John Delafield, than she had ever deemed possible in earlier times.

She began to see what her course must be, and the resolve she made stiffened her nature. But she was playing with fire.

Those were brilliant, but also anxious days. The country was at war. The hour was critical. Divisions of opinion were less marked than usual, for a common danger had united people of opposite sentiments to a very large extent, and as things grew more pressing, even those who had spoken most loudly against the action of men in authority were beginning to admit that after all they were in the right. Joyce moved in circles to which such questions as these were the breath of life. She enjoyed it: but it was the human side, not the political, in which she was interested.

One day Hugh Carden, burning with zeal for what he conceived to be the truth, let drop a few words which roused her to political argument. It did not last long, however. Her woman's tongue soon showed that her interest was personal, not general. She spoke the name of Sir John Delafield with consuming bitterness.

"You have some reason for your hatred?" he questioned.

She denied it.

"Why then do you speak so pointedly of him?"

"Perhaps it is part of the game we are all playing. One always tries to stab with words, instead of using more dangerous weapons, by way of proving that man by nature must be in a state of war against man."

"But this is woman against man."

"Is it? Perhaps you are right, and in any case you men hold together. Why do you let Sir John drag you at his chariot-wheel, Mr. Carden?"

"I don't. You are libellous, positively libellous." But he smiled as he spoke.

"You praised him in public the other day."

"It does not follow that I love him. I can do a man justice even if I am opposed to him."

"But are you opposed to him?"

"A leading question!"

"You are not. I know you better than you think. You are going to let him draw you to him. You are going to follow his star. It will not give you much light."

"I think that Sir John Delafield is an honest man. He disapproves of the war, but is that dishonest?"

"And do you disapprove?"

She shot a fierce glance at him, in challenge.

"I have not quite made up my mind."

Joyce laughed. "I am afraid I was not libellous after all," she said. "You do disapprove. I can see it in your eyes. Only you dare not say so to me."

He tried to answer with a laugh: and a look of tenderness came into his eyes.

"There are a great many things I dare not say to you," was his answer, given in low tones.

"An admission, an admission! I would not say as much to you." She steadily ignored his impressive looks, his ardent glances. "I tell you freely and frankly that I view Sir John Delafield with contempt. He is a time-server, an opportunist. You are going the same way."

"I should like you to prove that."

"Give me time. A week, a fortnight. Yes, let it be a fortnight."

"But what is it that we set out to prove or disprove?"

"That Sir John Delafield is dishonourable, unworthy of trust. That those who follow him are seeking their own ends, are traitors to their country. Why, you need but look at the man, Mr. Carden, to know that I am right. Take him physically. He does not even belong to the striding family of creatures, but to the strutting, like the peacocks."

"Why should we quarrel over a mere man, after all?" Hugh Carden asked.

"I might be deeply interested in a mere man," she answered dangerously.

"You mean that?" He tried to look into her face.

She turned quickly away. Then she murmured, "And mentally! I am sure mentally Sir John Delafield is contemptible!"

"Oh, why can't we leave the man alone?" cried Hugh impetuously.

"His mind must be like the buttons on his waistcoat, seldom detached, but always detachable."

"Joyce, Joyce, why dwell on it? Can't you see that you make me desperate for something?"

She took no notice of the name he had thus used for the first time, but seemed to grow instantly colder.

"We might be very good friends," she said after a pause, and with emphasis on the last word.

"It is not enough, Joyce. We understood each other a year ago. What has come between us?"

"Your friendship for Sir John Delafield."

"A political friendship is compatible with personal enmity."

"Then you are his friend, after all!"

"What does it matter? Say what I ask you to say, and you shall choose my friends for me henceforward."

"And your career?"

"What's a career to a man in love? I would forswear it all, Joyce, for you madden me. I have my chance this very day. For years we have been losing ground: as a party we are nearly discredited. What we lack is courage—the courage to stand up for peace."

"The courage to be traitors to your country."

Her voice was scornful, and his spirit rose to meet it.

"No"! he cried. "We have our work to do; we only lack the strength of will that makes hard duty possible. I tell you that I have my chance to-day, if you will but listen. It is for you to choose what I shall do. Give me one word of hope, and you shall mould my life in whatever direction it may please you."

"That might be a grave responsibility."

"As if you would shirk responsibility!"

"There is nothing to stand in the way of simple hope," she said.

The words were spoken in a vibrant tone, and in reply to them a warm flush overspread the manly face. "Then," he said, "you must know all. We have fenced round the subject long enough. You were right. The man you hate has made me an offer, which will tie me to him—'bind me to his chariot-wheel'—for life, if I accept it. You shall decide."

"Before I do so I must know what the offer is."

He gave her a letter. "Read," he said.

Joyce read, and Hugh Carden watched her. He saw her colour come and go. Hers was the face of one ready to force her own powers of mind into any channel, and this meant that she could bend the will of another the same way if she chose; yet it was a face which growth of character had not deprived of sweetness, and London had not taken away the fresh colour that belonged to Froyle. Printed on the mind so that he could read it at this very moment was an impression recorded by Hugh on the day of their first meeting in the strange old house on the moor; and that memory chaining his thought, he watched her as she read the letter written by Sir John Delafield. The real emotion caused by sight of her enemy's handwriting he had no power to discern. He did not understand Joyce: he only loved her.

At last she spoke.

"I am glad that it is you who must answer that letter, not I," she said.

"You must decide," he answered quickly.

"He asks for an answer within twenty-four hours. When did you receive it?"

"To-night. Only an hour before I came to you."

"Knowing what I think of him, and knowing me, you leave it to me to answer this letter—to decide what you shall say."

Her manner had grown stern and serious. Her voice even trembled a little.

"Knowing you?" he questioned tenderly. "Loving you, rather. Love has greater trust than Knowledge will ever attain to."

She replied faintly.

"The answer to-morrow!"

With that they parted. Joyce took up the letter and read it again. It was a wild conflict of strange feelings that raged in her soul. Her enemy was literally delivered into her hand! The voice of her father

came back to her, a penetrating utterance, with death behind it. There was no denying the force of it, nor any deliverance from that promise, of which, indeed, she had increased the power during the years that had turned her from girl to woman. The desire to ruin Sir John Delafield had even become sweet to her; sweet as sacred things are sweet. Revenge must blot out not only the law of pity, but the sanction of honourable dealings.

Then she thought of Hugh. The intonation of his voice had been such that to-night for the first time she held it really possible to return the affection he was ready to lavish upon her. How easily, by dwelling upon a look, a word, a sign, might her resolution falter! She looked at the letter again.

A terrible repugnance to the man who had written these lines took hold of her as she read and wondered. Her mind dwelt upon the known instances of treachery foiled by treachery. Were they ever justified? An intense hatred such as hers, rooted in devotion to a father's loyalty, based upon a wrong, an injury to the family name—such a hatred needed little to inflame it. But still Joyce's conscience was pricking her, and she looked round for encouraging facts. Sir John Delafield she knew for an ambitious man. That ambition would have been checked long ago, no doubt, if ill-health had not stood in the way of personal action on her father's part. He, at least, recluse though he had been, was no coward. He had left revenge to her because accident had rendered him powerless: and as Joyce read the story of his life she understood him, forgot his strangeness, began to love him.

"To know all is to forgive all," she reflected.

Joyce came down the broad staircase a little later, gave her orders, and within an hour was driving towards Fleet Street.

There was no need to take the letter from her pocket now, for she knew it by heart.

"Publish that letter, and the man Delafield is proved a traitor! It is not a mere question of opinion, a matter of sentiment, this time, Joyce Arundell! You are doing what few women, and fewer men have the courage to do. What this man has committed to writing, though he has omitted to mark it so, is private, no doubt—deeds of darkness are always done in private—conspiracies are set on foot in the shade, deep, deep down, far from scrutiny of prying eyes. Let such things come to your knowledge, and you are bound to drag them into the full light of day. Sir John Delafield counts on time; time is power. He is wilfully leaguering himself with the enemies of his country, so that power and place may be his in a little while! Publish that letter, Joyce Arundell, and the scheme, yet feeble, is crushed—killed at birth. Leave it, and the monstrous thing will grow. Act quickly, Joyce Arundell, there is a great reward!"

Such the voices, such their message, as the carriage-wheels rolled on to the tuneful noise of busy streets and the accompaniment of the

night's music. A light rain blurred the window-panes, and beyond them bright yellow stars shone against a moving background of deep shadows.

Hugh's face seemed suddenly to come before her, and she winced from the glance that searched her through and through.

"What effect will this have on me?" he seemed to ask. She choked her rising fears with a strong effort, reasoning swiftly. "To know all is to forgive all!"

The die was cast now; her mind was made up. She took refuge once more in the recollection of recorded facts. Other women had done things of this order, sometimes prompted by mere passion, sometimes by wild personal ambition, sometimes by real love of country. Hers was for a sacred cause—private honour, public safety. Beyond this the pure flame of her own love which burnt high in her soul—felt now, realised now—might perhaps be quenched for ever as far as the world was concerned. For what was Hugh but a man; and would a man forgive?

Joyce clenched her hands together, set her lips firmly, and alighted, with a step that betrayed no vestige of nervousness, in the dim courtyard, which was illuminated only by a flaring gas-jet here and there, and nearly deserted. A faint echo as of some great human hive within reached her ears; far beyond, the mighty presses were working, but not at full speed, for the hour was not yet late. She breathed freely when she had given her name, asking for an interview. The man who took the message, after requesting her to wait, manifested no surprise; he was evidently accustomed to all kinds of callers. Joyce waited, listening. Once inside, she could distinguish the sounds of awakening activity. The hum-hum-hum of machinery, the tinkle of little bells, the noise of clattering, boyish feet on stairs above, below; the curious whisperings that rose, only to die into sudden silence again behind closed doors—then a rush, a sound of wheels without—then an unexpected quiet; all this swift change and counterchange of movement smote on her ears, and the fresh interest, the half-mystery, steadied her nerves.

She was ushered into the editor's room a few moments later.

They were acquaintances already; but this was a meeting in which, perhaps, the fact of individual knowledge was a disadvantage. The control of a great newspaper is like the control of an empire, and for the trivial element of mere personality to step in, as a hindrance to action, may mean some grave disaster. On the other hand, information must not be refused, in whatever form it may be tendered. Joyce therefore was welcome; the man whose "velvet scabbard held a sword of steel" was more than a match for her. Courteous, careful, taciturn, he showed his suspicions plainly; but Joyce told her story without faltering, and placed Sir John Delafield's letter in his hands.

"We have done such a thing as you suggest once before, Miss Arundell," he said. "You know the price that we paid for it?"

"I know," she answered.

"This letter," the great man went on, and a smile came upon his pale face, "would make a sensation if we published it. Sir John Delafield is distinctly playing into the hands of our enemies. I cannot see on the face of it what he hopes to gain by it."

"For one thing, the support of the man to whom it is written."

The listener looked full in the eyes of the beautiful woman before him. He knew well that the man she spoke of was her slave.

"That would not be enough," he said. "But there is possibly something behind."

"You see what he asks Mr. Carden to do."

"To take his promise of help to the other side."

"Yes. That is the news I bring you. Sir John Delafield has an influence in the country which might ruin us at this crisis. It would mean a cry for peace—dishonourable peace. Publish that letter, and neither Mr. Carden nor any other will go to Brussels on this disgraceful errand."

"Does Mr. Carden dream of going?"

"Would that letter be here if he did?"

"But you said 'neither Mr. Carden nor any other.'"

"What I meant was this," Joyce explained, speaking very calmly. "Mr. Carden might conceivably have lent himself to this plan, simply because he has often tried to make himself believe that this war is iniquitous, and quite honourably he has pleaded for peace. But Sir John Delafield has pledged himself——"

"At Bristol, last October," interrupted the other.

"And this letter proves him a liar," said Joyce, with emphasis.

"It is serious," the editor admitted. For him, this was a forcible expression. "Will you leave the letter here?"

"And you will ——?"

"I promise nothing."

But Joyce went away satisfied.

The next morning the sensation-loving public was supplied with news. There is seldom place for anger in the national mind; and least of all against those who act a doubtful part in seeking political advantage. But in this hour the country was roused, for the times were critical. And here was a man who had not hesitated to break his oath, to speak words of encouragement, and that in secret, to a foreign foe. There was nothing for it but to hound Sir John Delafield from public life.

The hours passed slowly. Hugh came into the presence of Joyce at the appointed time. She received him gravely.

"So you have given me my answer," he said.

She noticed the pallor of his cheeks, she felt the anger of his tone cutting her like a knife. But she said nothing till he had spoken again.

"You have broken one man's heart," he told her.

"I had to do it."

"It might have been mine," he said passionately. "I trusted you with that letter. I would have trusted you with my soul."

Joyce winced. "But Sir John Delafield is a traitor. He has proved it by his own words."

"And the crowd is howling! They broke his windows this morning."

"You have seen him?"

"Of course."

"What did he say?"

"I told him the truth."

"Then he will come to break our windows next."

"I did not name you. I did not even say it was a woman."

Joyce relapsed into silence again.

"No, I see clearly what honour means," Hugh continued. "I *am* tied to Sir John's chariot-wheels henceforward. It is you who have done it."

"I? Is that how you look at *me*?"

"This is good-bye," he said.

She held out her hand as though to restrain him.

In answer, he found vigorous words.

"Here is a case," he cried, "where men will stand together. You little know what you have done! Do you think I care for myself? No: it is a double pain that you have dealt me. It may be well that I should go for years bearing the stigma of friendship for a man whom my foolish trust in you has disgraced; but God forgive me if I ever trust a woman again!"

In another moment he was gone.

The life of Joyce Arundell at Froyle is a lonely one. It is a long time since she flashed like a meteor across the London sky. Few retain any recollection of that swift flight: she grows old graciously: there are lines in her face which prove that she goes through mental trouble day by day.

And yet, as she takes her seat in the room opposite to the portrait of her mother, now restored to its place, a proverb comes into her mind, a hope into her heart.

"To know all is to forgive all." Some day he will know; some day he will forgive."

ARTHUR PASMORE.

AT SUNRISE

WAKE, lady, wake: the dawn has swept the sky,
And the stars yield their light to coming day,
There moves a breeze where the faint violets lie,
Bearing their scent along each woodland way
Where you shall stray.

Though visions, sweet as sight and scent of flowers,
Lie under eyelids lightly slumber-sealed,
Vistas of fresher glades and dewy bowers
Are waiting in the woodlands unrevealed.
And, far afield

Soft lie such shadows slanting on the grass
As are not seen, ev'n in that fairyland
Where, over misty lawns of slumber, pass
Shades of pure thoughts and happy fancies, planned
When daylight spanned

Heav'n's arch with blue from morn to evening star.
But haste! This hour of sunrise is not long;
Lead home thy spirit; it hath wandered far
Since sleep's soft voice called it at evensong,
And light grows strong!

Unfurl the folded thoughts that night has bound
In dreaming silence to await the day!
Come forth, come forth! The air is glad with sound,
The grass is green upon our upland way.
Nor longer stay!

But come! where lilies with the roses wed,
Come where are fields, come where the winds blow free;
Come where some stream unwinds a silver thread:
Come, dear, and lightly coming, bring with thee
Love's dawn for me!

F. J. CLAYTON.

IN THE WIND

BY THE EDITOR

WHAT'S in the wind?"

Change, for one thing. The *Argosy* has kept her course for a good many years now, and has been brought into port, by the labour that commands success, aided by favourable breezes, time after time, so that watchers have been wont to marvel at the regularity with which she has reached her haven. They have noted the brisk readiness of her captain in emergencies, they have been wont to count with confidence upon the sound condition of her merchandise. As the years have rolled on some pleasant memories have gathered round her; these will not be lost by change. New ports have been discovered by craft more venturesome; some of them have opened up desirable countries into which honest traders may venture, others—but we will not speak of the others. The *Argosy* will move with the times henceforward. But speaking of change, there will be no violence. We shall endeavour to retain the affection of old friends, and this not by feebleness and flabbiness of method, but by straightforward acceptance of the facts of life; for it is life, in its manifold aspects, with which this journal is concerned. The *Argosy* will not endeavour to imitate every sheet that seems to win for a time the popular favour; it will endeavour rather to base its reputation on a groundwork of excellence. The tricks of conjurers and contortionists, the domestic interiors of potentates, the collection of odds and ends, will not occupy our time. It is true that the present is a transition number, for, as stated above, violence is not much in our line. And our policy will be gradually revealed, let us hope, to an admiring world.

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It will be interesting to readers of the Magazine to know, I think, that the new serial, which commences in this number, is written by a lady whose work as a novelist is watched for with eager interest by many whose opinion is worth having. Only a short time ago the *Academy*, a paper which takes the lead in many literary matters, and is conducted with great enterprise, inaugurated a system of inquiry about the best books of the year, which proves very amusing as it appears at the close of each year. One of the representative people thus approached mentioned "Like Another Helen," and the opinion of this distinguished novelist has been echoed since then in the columns of the same paper. Not that Sidney C. Grier needs any introduction

to readers of the *Argosy*, or indeed to discriminating readers of fiction at all. But in these days of chaos and confusion in critical matters, it is a good thing occasionally to hear what people have to say who look at matters rather differently from the conventional and the anonymous critic. I feel sure that Sidney C. Grier's story, as it unfolds itself, will even rival in interest those which have gone before it. Another matter which I should like to mention in this place as a forthcoming feature in the *Argosy* for some time to come is this: the first of a series of articles on the Colleges of Oxford will commence in the February number. In these articles we propose to treat these remarkable institutions rather from the human than from the architectural side. The first article in this series will be written by Mr. A. D. Godley, who might in a sense be allowed copartnership with Mr. Jackson as a "Maker of Modern Oxford." The name of Calverly always occurs to the mind when that witty verse which the Universities always produce is in question. Mr. Godley twists and turns his quaint conceits in verse with the deftness and cleverness of a Calverly. As thus:—

"I am quite prepared to war
For my country, as I hope,
'Gainst the Kaiser, or the Czar,
Or the Pope:
Should society require it, most unquestionably I
With a self-denying spirit could persuade myself to die:
But to choke upon a platform
Needs devotion more than mine:
To be done to death in that form
I decline."

Here, however, it is not with topical verse that we are likely to be concerned. As one other of these academic versifiers puts it, what we want every now and again is something cultured yet cheerful, something sound and yet not stodgy—

"Full of learning put lightly, like powder in jam."

For we have to remember

"That even the heavenliest poet
Sinks somewhere safe to prose."

And in a theme such as that of Magdalen College, which the author of *Lyra Frivola*, himself a Fellow of that ancient foundation, will treat, we have one which lends itself to general consideration in a peculiarly amiable way. Few visitors to Oxford come away without a sketch or a sonnet begun, on Magdalen Cloisters, to be touched up when they get home. It will interest these as well as others to hear what an "insider" has to say.

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